



# Earth Artists Toolkit



Co-funded by  
the European Union



<b>Project name</b>	VOICES FOR CHANGE: MUSIC AND VOLUNTEERING FOR A DECOLONIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
<b>Acronym</b>	VOICES FOR CHANGE
<b>Coordinator</b>	CCIVS (THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE)

## Project Partners



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# **1. Introduction**

Welcome to Voices for Change! We hope you are here because you feel inspired to use your voice (or head, or heart, or hands or paintbrush, or creativity) to contribute to positive change for our beautiful planet Earth.

This project brings together volunteering, storytelling, and music to plant seeds of change for climate justice and community action. The Voices for Change Earth Artists Handbook is designed as a practical guide to help you create and lead local actions, while also connecting you to broader global movements for social and environmental justice.

**We belong to the Earth, and together, we can sing, dance, plant, protect, nurture, remember, restore, and re-story our communities and ecologies.**

## **2. Purpose of the Toolkit**

**This toolkit is designed to:**

- Support Earth Artists in implementing local actions that combine music, volunteering, and advocacy for environmental and social justice.
- Provide practical tools, guidelines, and inspiration to help communities express their concerns and aspirations through music and action.
- Serve as a standalone resource that can be reused by other organizations, facilitators, or communities, even beyond this project.
- Contribute to CCIVS' broader advocacy strategies and campaigns





### 3. What is Voices for Change?

**Voices for Change** is an international project that combines music, community volunteering, and advocacy to strengthen the International Voluntary Service (IVS) movement. It is **co-led by CCIVS and the International Music Council (IMC)**, building on IMC's mission to uphold the Five Music Rights while linking music to global action for environmental and social justice.

The project:

- **Strengthens the IVS movement by building partnerships and amplifying marginalized voices.**
- Fosters inclusion and diversity, challenging the perception of volunteering as just an isolated project, and reframing it as a transformational, life-changing experience.
- **Bridges grassroots activism with institutional advocacy, ensuring that local realities influence global decision-making.**

The activities of Voices for Change include capacity building, community actions, storytelling, and advocacy, culminating in a Change Capsule: a song, videos, policy proposals, and an advocacy strategy, supported by impact measurement tools.

#### **Partners include:**

CCIVS (France), International Music Council (France), GSM Youth Services Center (Turkey), Cantieri Giovani (Italy), Kenya Voluntary Service (Kenya), South Africa Workcamps Association (South Africa), Legambiente (Italy), Field Services and Inter-Cultural Learning (India), ESTYES (Estonia), INEX (Czech Republic), Fundación Proyecto Ecológico Chiriboga (Ecuador), and the Palestinian Center for Media, Research and Development (Palestine).



## 4. What is an Earth Artist?

The Earth Artists are a group of individuals from all around the world who connect through their love of Earth, passion for volunteering and creative activism. They are people who are involved in local actions and/or volunteer workcamps that involve events such as tree-planting, river cleanups, awareness raising events, community gardens and many more change-maker activities.

Their role is to share and teach the Echoes of Nature song so that we can create a worldwide wave that connects people and volunteers through music! They will share the recordings of these actions around the world, so that they can be shared to inspire others to engage in positive initiatives related to social-ecology.

**Earth Artists bring joy and gratitude to the workcamps and local actions they are engaged in, and inspire others to do the same! They help to inspire, harvest and share stories from the participants of these local actions, so that they can be shared with others around the world and locally, and share skills and inspiration, seeking common ground and respecting diversity.**





## **5. Why Combine Music, Volunteering, and Community Engagement as tools?**

Music is a language which can unite people for a cause, a concern, a celebration and more. **Music brings people together!**



Volunteering is a generous act of giving your time to something greater than you or to someone or something who needs support.

**Volunteering brings people together!**

Community engagement is the art of inspiring and connecting people from the same community on a matter of importance- it happens by people coming together to connect, share and care for each other and their environment.



**Music + Volunteering + Community Engagement = fun, inspired, inclusive, positive actions!**



## **6. Core Principles: Decolonial, Ethical, and Sustainable**

Our work is guided by four foundational principles:

### **1. Decolonial Approach**

We challenge colonial narratives and power dynamics by:

- Centering the knowledge, voices, and leadership of local communities.
- Rejecting “saviour” narratives and avoiding extractive approaches to storytelling.
- Recognizing historical injustices and working towards equity in both voice and action.

Read more here: <https://ccivs.org/decolonise/>

### **2. Ethics of Care**

- Always obtain **informed consent** before using any photos, recordings, or quotes (see Annex #3 for templates).
- **Children cannot provide informed consent themselves.** Even if parents or guardians consent, we avoid featuring identifiable images of children unless absolutely necessary and ethically justified.
- We never use children or vulnerable groups as “props” to make projects or volunteers look good.

### **3. Inclusion and Diversity**

We create safe and inclusive spaces, ensuring the participation of marginalized groups (youth, women, rural communities, people at risk of exclusion) and adapting activities to local cultural contexts.

### **4. Sustainability and Regeneration**

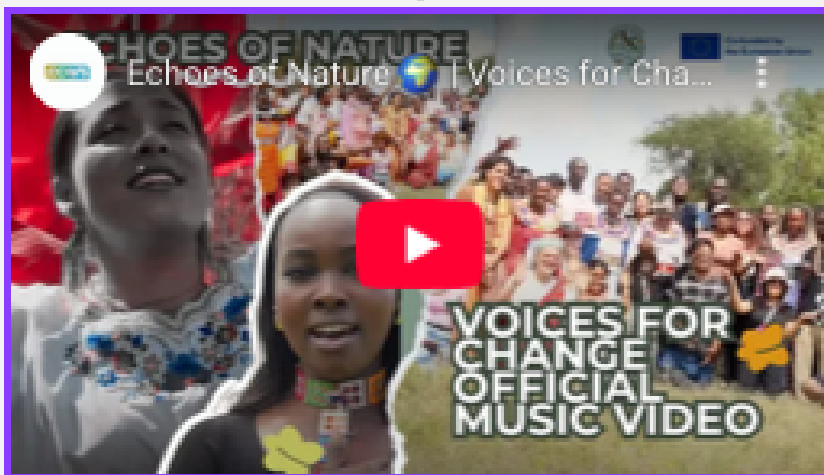
We minimize environmental impact by using eco-friendly materials, reducing waste, and aligning with the CCIVS Living Earth Sustainability Guidelines (see Annex Additional Resources for templates) to ensure that our actions regenerate rather than harm ecosystems.

## 7. The Song – Echoes of Nature

Echoes of Nature is the heart of Voices for Change—a collective song created to inspire reflection, hope, and collective action.

It is not meant to be sung in just one way. We encourage communities to adapt, remix, or reinterpret it using local languages, rhythms, and instruments.

[Listen to the song](#) & [watch the video](#):



**SING WITH  
US**



can you hear nature cry? (x4)

i'm gliding underwater,  
looking at the boats  
they remind me of a time  
when our shells were not a plastic coat  
i wonder if the animals, that walk on two feet  
know that deep down, we have the same heartbeat

deep down (x3)  
we have the same heartbeat

chorus  
sing for the earth (hope is my ally)  
stand with your people (active and alive)  
start with yourself (hope is my ally)  
let's make a change (active and alive)

our voices are travelling together,  
above the clouds,  
through the trees,  
under the oceans,  
fast on the glaciers

kosi sikelel  
i'africa, i'australia, i'asia, i'america, i'europa (x2)

ubuntu, ubuntu, ubuntu  
i am because we are

chorus  
sing for the earth (hope is my ally)  
stand with your people (active and alive)  
start from yourself (hope is my ally)  
let's make a change (active and alive)

bajan del norte con logos y promesas,  
llenar las aguas de mercurio y tristeza,  
compran gobiernos, compran la ley,  
el bosque se quema, y tu pensando que está ok!

the story they sold us was never ours  
why poison the rivers, and sell us the cure?  
for profit off the wreckage that we endure  
actors in power, them a' burnin' the land!  
stop burnin' land! (x2)  
stop burnin' future! (x2)

ecocide's a crime and we bear witness (x2)  
planet rebels, gives no forgiveness (x2)

can you hear nature cry? (x4)

## 8. Taking the Song to the Community / Your Local Projects

Bringing a social-ecologically inspired song to a community can be a powerful tool to inspire local volunteer action for change, especially if it's interactive, rooted in local stories, and tied to practical, visible efforts.

There are many creative, impactful ways that you can combine music, community, and environmental-social action. Here are some ideas to inspire you, but it is always important to design your actions according to the community, culture, context and resources specific to each situation.

Please be prepared to film and share the participants singing the song or singing the songs they created inspired by the song. Refer to section for recording guidelines, consent forms, etc

### Preparation Checklist:

- Understand the song's themes and adapt them to the local context.
- Partner with local leaders, artists, and youth groups to co-create activities.
- Collect consent for all photos, videos, and recordings (see Annex #3).
- Plan to give back—share recordings, translations, or creative outputs with the community.

## 9. Guidance for Local Actions

There are many ways to combine music, creativity, and action. **The key is to make them interactive, rooted in local stories, and tied to tangible efforts.** Here are some suggestions and ideas for workshops, festivals, regular group work, workcamps or other local actions. Please feel welcome to use these ideas and adapt them to suit your local context and needs.



## Voices for Change: Song + Earth Artist Workshop



**Concept:** Use the song as a starting point for a workshop that combines art and action.

**Format:**

**Part 1:** Listen to the song and/or watch the video Then discuss the song's themes - our local stories about climate, justice, nature, resilience, time for a change, advocacy

**Part 2:** Learn the song together. You can print out the lyrics or project them on a screen.

**Part 3:** Hold a sharing circle where each participant shares how the song makes them feel or think. Participants can choose one line of the song or a verse that touches them, and explain why and what it means to them.

**Part 4:** Create personal or group responses—mini songs, raps, poems, artwork, poster

**Part 5:** Implement a small local action (e.g., campaign to reduce single-use plastics at local events, create pollinator gardens, or clean up a local park or school ground).

**Possible partners:** Local schools, youth groups, eco clubs.

## Voices for Change "Sing for The Earth" - a 'sing it forward' challenge



**Concept:** Gather small groups to listen to and learn the song together, reflect on local challenges, and share personal stories related to what the song evokes for participants.

**Add the 'pledge to change' component:** After sharing, ask participants to commit to one small local action and create a way to share these actions digitally and to follow up and keep in touch, thereby creating a network of actors and supporters for future actions together, eg, via a social media app or group chat.

**During each action, include a moment where the group sings the song (or part of the song).** Film this and share on your local networks, tagging friends and organisations to do the same! Create a challenge that trends of people standing together and acting for socio-ecological change

#singitforward #VoicesForChange, #MusicForChange, #VolunteeringForJustice, #DecoloniseIVS, #EUYouth, #Artist



## Voices for Change "One Verse, One Action" Campaign

**Concept:** Break the song into verses or lines, each linked to a specific local action.

**For example:**

Lines about water pollution → River clean-up campaign/ Beach clean up/ Peaceful protest & awareness raising campaigns to protect coastal wildlife from corporate exploitation.

*"Bajan del norte con logos y promesas,  
Llenan las aguas de mercurio y tristeza"*  
and from an endangered turtle's perspective:

*"I'm gliding underwater,  
Looking at the boats  
They remind me of a time,  
When our shells were not a plastic coat"*

Lines about biodiversity and action → Native plant garden project.

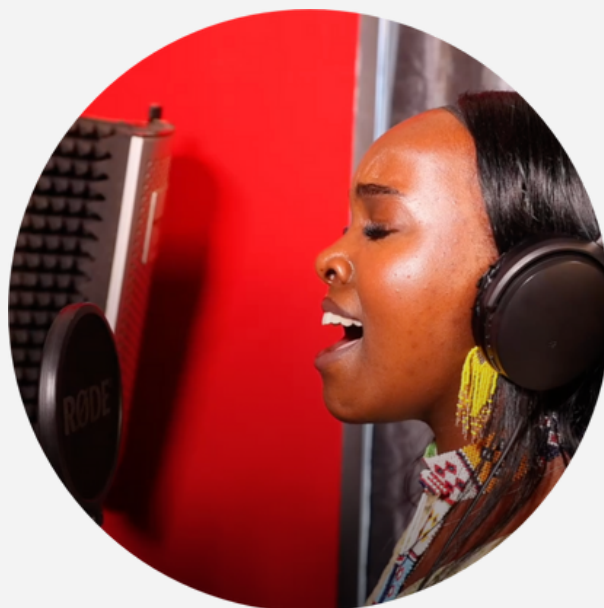
*"I wonder if the animals, that walk on two feet  
Know that deep down, we have the same heartbeat."*

*"Ecocide's a crime and we bear witness"*

*"Start with yourself"*

Verse about justice → Community mutual aid effort.

*"The story they sold us was never ours.  
Why poison the rivers, and sell us the cure?  
For profit off the wreckage that we endure  
Actors in power, them a' burnin' the land!  
Stop burnin' land!  
Stop burnin' future!  
Stop burnin' land!  
Stop burnin' future!"*



**Weekly challenge:** Promote one line per week on social media and in the community, encouraging people to participate in that week's action.

## Voices for Change Song Remix Challenge: “Voices of the Community”

**Concept:** Invite local community members, musicians and youth to remix or reinterpret the song with their own perspective.

**Part 1:** Learn and sign the song together

**Part 2:** Brainstorm and share how the song relates to that specific community or environment

**Part 3:** Groups have fun adding additional parts (perhaps a spoken word or rap) and/or a choreography or expressive dance that animates the song or gives it a different sound, feel or style.

**Part 4:** Implement a local action that relates to the song- host a tree planting to green a neighbourhood or plant containers and pots with pollinator attracting flowers and herbs next to a bench to make a beautiful, nature connection space in a school.

Record the action taking place and the new version/s of the song at each event. Share on social media and tag others challenging them to do the same. Tag #CCIVS and inform [secretariat@ccivs.org](mailto:secretariat@ccivs.org) (VFC partners to also upload to the specific Shared Folder for your organisation).

### Extra Idea!

**Create a mixtape:** All versions can be compiled into a community album. Use it as outreach: Play it at events, air it on local radio, or use it to open community meetings.





## Voices for Change Eco-Festival



**Concept:** Create a local festival collaborating with a school, library or organisation to celebrate community resilience and sustainability, with the song as the main theme.

**You could create art floats, costumes, info booths, and performance stages run by different classes or groups. The themes can be related to the themes of the song and students can research and prepare different parts of the festival. There can be a performance of the song by all the students that teaches everyone attending the festival about the song and how to sing it.**

Use the song to promote awareness about the most relevant themes and local issues.

Engage local artists to attend and support the event: Have them interpret the song in visual art, dance, or spoken word.

Invite local people or organisations who are engaged in volunteering, social-ecological activism to share or present their work so that people can get involved in actions.

Hold a community action where everyone can get involved- collect rubbish, pack ecobricks and build a bench together, then plant a tree and flowers/ herbs nearby to create a space for nature connection and quiet reflection.

There are so many creative possibilities for local actions, here are some more ideas:

### **Suggested discussion topics:**

- Local challenges and local solutions
- Biodiversity loss and the breakdown of the village
- Environmental justice
- Climate crisis/ Polycrisis
- Social inclusion
- Colonial legacies and inequalities
- Deep listening circles: Listen to the song and create safe, sharing and witnessing activities where participants share about their concerns and eco-grief and others listen.
- Sing and serve circles: a place to share a communal meal and sing the song together and have open dialogue about the issues raised in the song
- Community discussions: use topics addressed in the song such as decolonisation, ecology, systems theory, indigenous wisdom, nature connection. You can find elders, experts and community members and invite them to share their stories and experience.
- Volunteer action days linked to environmental or social causes
- Public sharing events, concerts, exhibitions, festivals

## 10. Community Engagement Guidelines

Community engagement is the heart of Voices for Change. This work is not about “delivering” a song or activity, but about building relationships, co-creating experiences, and amplifying local voices.

### Key Guidelines:

- **Build Trust:** Begin by listening—host open circles where community members share their concerns, dreams, and stories.
- **Co-create, Don't Impose:** Let the community guide how the song and activities take shape.
- **Inclusion & Equity:** Actively involve marginalized groups (youth, women, elders, Indigenous communities) and create accessible spaces where all voices are heard.
- **Ethics & Consent:** Clearly explain how any images, recordings, or stories will be used. Use the Media Consent Form (Annex #3).
- **Children:** Children cannot give informed consent themselves. Even if a parent or partner organization provides consent, ask: Is it necessary or ethical to feature a child's image? As a rule, avoid identifiable images of children unless absolutely necessary. Children must never be portrayed as “props” or tools for external validation.
- **Safe Spaces:** Create environments where participants feel respected and supported. Encourage open dialogue, and set group agreements around listening, confidentiality, and inclusion.

For detailed communication and advocacy principles, see Section 13.





# **11. Songwriting for Social and Environmental Justice**

## **Creative Approach & Principles**

### **Why songwriting is an effective tool for advocacy and social change?**

Songwriting is a powerful tool for advocacy and social change because it combines emotion, storytelling, and repetition—three key drivers of awareness, empathy, and action. Throughout history, songs have unified movements, preserved cultural memory, and given voice to those often unheard.

Songs translate abstract problems (like climate change or systemic racism) into personal stories that people can connect with emotionally. Hearing a first-person perspective in a song can build empathy more effectively than statistics or reports.

Example: “Strange Fruit” by Billie Holiday brought racial violence into mainstream awareness through haunting imagery and melody.

#### **It Amplifies Marginalized Voices**

Songwriting gives people—especially youth, Indigenous communities, and marginalized groups—a platform to express their truths in their own words. Music allows self-representation and challenges dominant narratives.

“Fight the Power” by Public Enemy empowered Black communities to speak out against injustice.

#### **It Unites People Emotionally and Physically**

Songs can mobilize crowds at protests, vigils, or events—creating a sense of collective identity and solidarity. Repetition of lyrics creates shared memory and cultural resilience.



## It Crosses Borders and Languages

Music can transcend language, geography, and political boundaries, making it a global communication tool. Songs travel through communities, social media, protests, and radio more easily than policy documents.

## It Sustains Movements Over Time

Movements need not just policy—but culture. Songs carry the spirit, slogans, and memory of struggles through generations. Artists often become ambassadors for causes, sustaining visibility. Example: “Beds Are Burning” by Midnight Oil helped bring attention to Aboriginal land rights in Australia.

## It Sparks Dialogue and Critical Thinking

Lyrics can provoke questions, reflection, and debate, making people reconsider their positions. Music can be a gentle entry point into difficult conversations.

Key songwriting principles:

- Inclusion, diversity, and decolonial perspective
- Amplifying local voices and community stories
- Community participation in song creation



# Songwriting Methodology



## 1. Gathering Community Stories, Concerns, and Experiences

Start by listening. Songwriting should emerge from the community, reflecting their real-life experiences, emotions, and local struggles.

- **Story Circles:** Invite participants to share stories about the environment, social justice, or community life. Use prompts like:
  - “When was the last time you felt deeply connected to nature?”
  - “What change would you like to see for the next generation?”
- **Memory Mapping:** Ask participants to create a simple map of important places or events in their community that could inspire lyrics.
- **Object Stories:** Encourage people to bring an object (a seed, tool, or photo) and share its story as a starting point for song themes.

## 2. Storytelling, Lyric Writing, and Creative Exercises

- **Shared Brainstorm:** Use large sheets of paper or a wall to collect key words, local phrases, or ideas that emerge from the stories.
- **Call and Response:** Try a quick exercise where one person suggests a line or word and the group responds with what comes to mind. This can organically form verses or choruses.
- **Poetry-to-Song:** Encourage participants to write short poems or haikus about their experiences with nature or justice, then adapt these into lyrics.
- **Rhythmic Chants:** Build rhythm by turning powerful statements into spoken chants (e.g., “*Stop burning land, stop burning future*”).

## 3. Incorporating Local Languages, Cultural References, and Musical Styles

- **Multilingual Verses:** Add lines in the community’s language(s) to make the song feel owned by the group.
- **Cultural Motifs:** Include local rhythms, melodies, or traditional instruments to give the song authenticity.
- **Shared Learning:** Invite local musicians or elders to teach a rhythm or melody that can be woven into the song.

## 4. Building a Collective Message

The song should connect **local realities to broader social and environmental justice struggles**.

- Discuss key messages: “What do we want the world to hear?”
- Choose 1–3 core themes (e.g., water, land, justice, hope) and build the song around them.
- Consider linking personal stories to global movements (e.g., verses about local water struggles linked to global climate campaigns).

## 5. Melody and Rhythm Exercises Accessible to All

- **One-Note Melody:** Start with a single note that everyone can sing, then add variations and harmonies.
- **Body Percussion:** Use clapping, snapping, or foot-stomping to create beats when instruments aren't available.
- **Improvisation:** Encourage participants to hum or sing freely, capturing spontaneous melodies.
- **Loop Building:** Record simple vocal or rhythmic loops (even on a phone) to layer voices and ideas.

## Additional Suggestions:

- **"One-Line Chorus" Exercise:** Ask each participant to suggest one line of hope or resistance; combine them into a chorus.
- **Remix of Echoes of Nature:** Use the original song as a base, adding a new verse that reflects local struggles or successes.
- **Visual-to-Lyric Activity:** Have participants create drawings or collages of their visions for the future, then translate these visuals into lyrics.



## Songwriting masterclass exercises from Checkmate Mido

The dancing poet Mido, facilitator of the process that created the song 'Echoes of Nature' and the songwriting workshop, during the Earth Artist training that took place in Kenya in 2025.

### How to:

**1. Begin with breathing exercises** to warm up the voice and activate creative energy within the mind.

### 2. Writing exercise.

- a. *Swimming exercise* – In this exercise participants write in a notebook/piece of paper continuously for a specified amount of time. The idea is to keep writing non-stop from the moment the timer starts until when the time is finished. This is to encourage a clear flow of ideas in the mind. This can be done for 2, 3 or 5 minutes. The ideas don't have to connect at this stage.
- b. During the second attempt at the exercise above. The participants can now write to the theme/prescribed text and write with an aim to develop ideas. This section is usually longer and can last from 10, 20 or 30 minutes depending on available time.
- c. Introduce concepts of songwriting. Discussions on/and determination of Mood, Tone, Phrasing e.t.c Participants can work individually or in groups for this stage. With an aim of presenting texts at the end of the allocated time.
- d. Introduce melody to the text if not already available/present. This can be done with the help of rhythm exercises or clapping a selected rhythm or music if already available.
- e. Assimilate ideas focusing on song structure i.e a chorus, different verses e.t.c
- f. Once you have the final song draft, rehearse and sing your heart out.

*NB. Phone recordings are really helpful for remembering ideas and as a reference.*

### 3. Rhythm exercises



a. Passing numbers around in a circle to a rhythm. This exercise can incorporate movement as well to make it more fun. Participants count and pass the numbers in a circle in order from 1-7, or 1-5 without dropping the rhythm. Each number is given a sound and an action, as it is passed around. Eg. 1 can be “1 clap”, 2 = make the sound “wooo”. 3= “click click”, 4= “boom” and so on.

b. Ringu ringu akarungurira wefwe – A fun rhythm game that can also be used for ice breaker sessions.

1. The participants form a circle with the facilitator as ‘the lead’.
2. The lead’ initiates a clapping rhythm and chants this phrase to it, “Ringu Ringu Akarungurira Wefwe” to which the participants respond (to the rhythm) with “Akarungurira”. This can be repeated up to four times at the beginning, or until a good consistent rhythm is established.
3. The lead, turning either to their left or right, raises their hands with an intention to give a two handed high five to the second person away from them. Assuming the lead starts with their left side, the person immediately next to the lead bends down to allow this to happen. While passing the rhythm ‘the lead’ chants “Ringu”, to which the other participants respond, “Akarungurira”. They respond while clapping to the word “Akarungurira” (which has to be clapped in the same rhythm established before).
4. Immediately after the clapping of the rhythm, the person who bent down, gets up and passes the rhythm word “Akarungurira” to the second person on their left (similar to how the lead did) keeping the ‘rhythmic wave’ going in the same direction started by the lead. This movement goes on until the ‘wave’/rhythmic word “Akarungurira” makes its way around the circle and returns back to the lead. This is counted as one complete cycle.
5. Repeat as many times as necessary until the participants can do it without dropping/changing the rhythm.





c. Variations:

- As the participants become more comfortable with the rhythm, the tempo can be sped up.
- The game can also be played with two rhythmic waves of “Akarungurira” started by the lead in two different directions i.e left and right simultaneously.
- The game can be played with two leads, however the directions of the rhythmic word/wave “Akarungurira” have to be different, i.e one wave goes to the right, another to the left.

d. Tips.

- Play around with different participants assuming the role of the lead.
- One can allow participants to come up with creative ways to pass the rhythm, especially in situations where two or more rhythmic waves are going around the circle at the same time.
- Keep it fun. (Be aware of energy levels during the game and allow it to come to a natural conclusion)



## **12. Tools & Methods for Community Engagement, Creative & Participatory Approaches**



This section builds on Section 9: Guidance for Local Actions and the Songwriting Methodology, offering a practical set of tools to help Earth Activists and facilitators engage communities creatively and ethically. It combines participatory approaches with technical tips for music, video, and documentation, ensuring every action remains inclusive, respectful, and effective.

### **Tools & Methods for Community Engagement**

The transition from songwriting to local action is where creativity comes alive. Once participants have explored stories and written lyrics, the next step is to translate the energy of the song into collective activities.

Refer to Section 9: Guidance for Local Actions for detailed ideas like eco-festivals, public performances, and “One Verse, One Action” campaigns. Use the following tools to bridge songwriting sessions with community action planning:

- **Song as Catalyst:** Start workshops by singing or listening to Echoes of Nature. Invite participants to discuss which lines resonate most and why.
- **Story Harvesting & Mapping:** Use storytelling and memory-mapping exercises to connect song themes to local issues.
- **Action Brainstorming:** Ask: “What action reflects the message of our lyrics?” Encourage ideas like planting, cleaning, or awareness campaigns that are locally relevant and feasible.
- **Collective Ownership:** Ensure actions are led by the community, not imposed externally.

## Creative & Participatory Tools

- **Storyboarding and Visual Mapping:** Link verses or themes to images, ideas, or actions by creating a collaborative wall of drawings, photos, or words.
- **Collaborative Lyric Building:** Encourage everyone to contribute words or lines, integrating local languages or cultural references.
- **Performance Design:** Experiment with call-and-response formats, harmonies, or simple movements to bring the song to life.
- **Roles and Teams:** Assign group roles (e.g., lyric keepers, rhythm makers, visual artists) to involve everyone.

## Group Facilitation Approaches

Creating a safe space for expression and discussions on local challenges, environmentalism, socio-ecological justice and other themes from *Echoes of Nature*.

### **Establishing Group agreements**

Always start the sessions with an agreement to confidentiality and agreeing to create a safe space. You can make some suggestions on how to do this and write down agreements on a large poster paper. Agreeing on the values together with all participants present contributes to creating a safe and inclusive space. Values such as:

- respect
- one voice at a time (no interruptions)
- build up, not put down statements
- timeliness (On time! In time! Every time!)
- Each one teach one (everyone brings something of value to the discussion, we learn from each other)
- Valuing diversity (a rainbow of perspectives)
- Step up, step down (encourages those who speak a lot to give space to more quiet or less verbal people, and invites those who are usually shy or more comfortable observing to participate more)
- self care (drink water, take breaks)
- group awareness (notice when others may be feeling unsafe or uncomfortable or excluded)

## Listening

*“Genuine listening is not about providing solutions, but creating a safe space for others to express themselves.”*

Marshall B. Rosenberg, founder and facilitator of NVC (Non-Violent Communication)

Listening is an art. As a facilitator you have the opportunity to support and encourage people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Positive and well-held Facilitation often creates the opportunity for participants to gain confidence to speak in a group, or to share their perspectives in front of others, or even to step into positive action in their local communities and ecosystems. You are not expected to have all the answers or to be an expert about their local context or situation. It is your role to enquire, to listen deeply and to offer understanding and support. When we listen deeply, we listen beyond just the words that someone is saying. We listen for what is important for them, the values they are expressing and the places where they may be challenged or blocked. There are many ways to listen- by observing body language, tone of voice, speed at which someone is talking, etc. When we observe someone while they are sharing, we can learn to ask the right questions.

### Some ways to support a deep listening space:

- **Ask HOW, WHY, IN WHAT WAY, WHICH, WHERE, WHEN, WHO questions.** Such as “How do you imagine this action will impact your community on a social level?”, “Why do you feel this action is important for the present and future generations?”, “In which way could you make this action even more appealing to gain the support it deserves?”
- As in the above examples, ask questions that expand the answers across time and inspire creative thought. Avoid yes/no questions “Do you think this action will impact your community positively?”
- People process at different speeds! Some people need space and time to reflect before answering a question. Give people time and don’t rush.
- ...





- ...
- If people are slow to respond, give them the opportunity to journal or write down their response first. Or, allow people to share in pairs or small groups first. Then invite each pair/ group to briefly share the outcome of the dialogue with the larger group.
- In group settings, encourage those who aren't speaking to contribute, by inviting them to share their answer in just a few words. Even offering a single word response can be very powerful! For example, you can say, "If you could summarise your answer in just 3 words, what would they be?"
- In a more formal setting, it can be very helpful to write the question on a board or poster for people to read and allow a few minutes of silent, reflection time before participants speak their answers.
- If someone is blocked or not wanting to answer, never force them to respond, always allow for the option to pass, you can come back to that person at the end if they feel ready after hearing others' responses.
- Remember that people can be different on different days.
- If possible, answer the questions you are asking by modelling an answer, or give your authentic answer too. The more you participate authentically, the more connection you will create with participants. do stay positive and honest, and avoid trying to influence others with your opinion, as the facilitator, you have some power and it's important to acknowledge this.



## Giving and receiving feedback

Feedback is very useful and helps us to learn and grow. Offering feedback in a supportive and constructive way can be uplifting and very useful like watering a plant. Harsh, aggressive or insensitive feedback can have the opposite effect of shutting people down and harming their self-confidence or belief in a project- like a hailstorm or a flood can damage a plant. It may be the same water, but the way it's given makes all the difference!

**A useful formula for giving feedback is to ask two questions. Allow participants to first give feedback for themselves and reflect on their own participation, and then to reflect on the session or day.**

- What went well (for you)?
- What could be better (for you)?
- What did I learn?
- and How do I feel?

**Always start on the positive! This sets up a strong foundation to receive input and maintain a positive, growth mindset.**

Always ask for feedback for yourself too! Evaluate your own contributions, your own participation and the sessions. A quick and useful way to end a session is to ask these three questions:

- How do you feel?
- What did you learn?
- Would you change anything about today if you could?



## Technical Tools for Audio & Video

### AUDIO

Open-source tools for recording & editing music

#### 1. Audacity

**Platform:** Windows, macOS, Linux

**Main Features:**

- Multi-track audio editing and recording
- Effects: reverb, equalization, pitch/time shift, etc.
- Support for VST, LADSPA, and LV2 plugins
- Import/export WAV, MP3, FLAC, and more

#### 2. Ardour

**Platform:** Linux, macOS, Windows

**Main Features:**

- Professional-grade DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) for recording, editing, mixing
- Multi-track recording and editing
- Non-destructive editing with unlimited undo/redo
- MIDI and automation support

### Basic guide to sound recording (low-budget options)

If you're on a tight budget or just want to use what you already have, smartphones can be powerful tools for recording music or voice. Here's how you can get started using smartphone apps, along with some recommended low-cost accessories to level up your recordings.



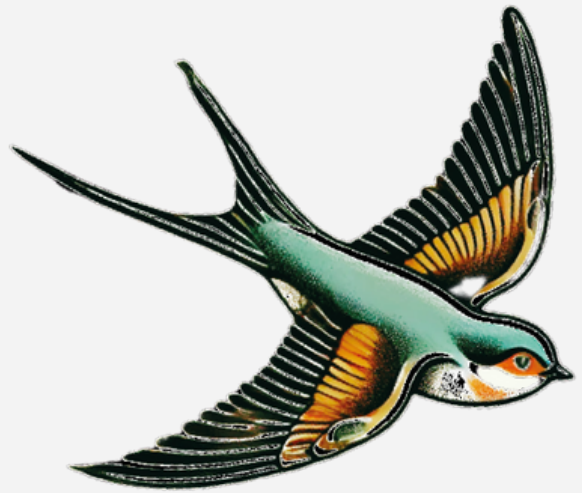
## For Voice & Basic Music Recording

### 1. BandLab (iOS & Android) – Free

- Multi-track DAW for mobile
- Built-in effects, virtual instruments
- Cloud collaboration and publishing
- Great for music demos or podcasts

### 2. Dolby On (iOS & Android) – Free

- One-tap noise reduction, EQ, compression
- Great for vocals, podcasts, or acoustic instruments
- Automatically masters your recording



## Tape it

- High-quality stereo recording
- Auto-tagging of recordings (based on instrument type)
- Organized library with titles, descriptions, and tags
- Add photos & notes to each take (e.g., mic placement, tuning)
- Easy sharing and cloud backup
- Smart waveform display and bookmarking to mark good takes or ideas

## External Microphones for Phones

- Lavalier (clip-on): BOYA BY-M1 (~\$15–20) – Works with phones, DSLR, PC
- Shotgun mics: Rode VideoMic Me (~\$50) – Great for focused vocal pickup
- USB-C/Lightning mics: Shure MV88 (iOS) or Fifine AmpliGame A6V (USB-C)

## Tips for Better Results with a Phone

- Enable airplane mode during recording to avoid interruptions
- Record in a quiet, soft-furnished space (closet, car, etc.)
- Stabilize your phone on a tripod or stand
- Keep your mic off-axis from your mouth to reduce plosives
- Record in WAV if possible for better quality





## VIDEO

### Smartphone

#### 1. Use a Manual Camera App

Smartphones default to auto settings like exposure and focus can look amateurish. Use a manual app like Blackmagic Camera (free) to control settings for a cinematic look.

#### 2. Set the Frame Rate

Switch from the default 30fps to 24fps or 25fps for a film-like feel. Use 60fps for slow motion and 120fps for super slow motion.

#### 3. Lock Exposure and Focus

Tap and hold on the screen to lock exposure (turns red), preventing brightness changes during filming. Tap on your subject to focus and lock it similarly.

#### 4. Use a Stabilizer

A tripod helps get smooth shots. If you don't have one, steady your phone on a surface. Turn off digital stabilization in your app when using a tripod or similar.

#### 5. Use Multiple Focal Lengths

Switch between your phone's lenses (wide, mid, close-up) for depth. If your phone doesn't have multiple lenses, no worries!

#### 6. Use a Grid Guide and Rule of Thirds

Enable a grid to help compose shots by placing key subjects along the grid lines or intersections. This makes your footage more natural and engaging.

#### Extra Tips:

- Phone Orientation: Use horizontal (landscape) for cinematic videos, vertical (portrait) for social media.
- Lighting: Use natural light and avoid relying on your phone's flash.
- Audio: Use an external mic for clear sound.
- Avoid Shaky Footage: Use tripods or stabilizers.

#### Ethics of Media Use

All media created in Voices for Change must follow the ethical communication principles detailed in Section 13, with particular attention to consent and accurate representation during recording and editing.

## **AI-Assisted Tools**

*Disclaimer: Voices for Change prioritizes human creativity, cultural authenticity, and community voices. AI tools are optional and must be used responsibly, with full transparency and respect for participants.*

AI can assist with technical tasks but must never replace the human creativity and ownership of the community.

### **Examples of Responsible Use:**

- Subtitles & Transcription: Use AI (e.g., HappyScribe, Descript) to create captions or transcripts, but always verify accuracy.
- Language Accessibility: AI translators (e.g., DeepL) can help reach wider audiences, but translations must be reviewed by native speakers.
- Transparency: Always disclose when AI is used (e.g., for captions or brainstorming ideas).

### **Ethical Note**

AI can perpetuate harmful stereotypes or biases embedded in its training data. Use AI critically, with full awareness of its limitations and risks.

AI systems can have a significant carbon footprint.

Choose low-energy, local tools where possible, and avoid unnecessary AI usage for tasks that can be done collaboratively by the group.

**Read more about AI and Ethics here:** <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence>



## **13. Communication, Visibility & Advocacy.**

When documenting and sharing social or environmental justice work, communication must empower, not exploit. Ethical communication ensures the dignity, safety, and agency of all individuals and communities involved. It also avoids reinforcing harmful stereotypes or colonial narratives, and prioritizes authentic representation of local voices and leadership. This section consolidates all principles mentioned in earlier sections.

### **Ethical Communication Principles**



#### **Respect & Consent**

- Always obtain informed consent for quotes, photos, videos, and stories.
- Clearly explain how the content will be used and ensure participants understand their right to withdraw consent at any time.
- Wherever possible, give participants the opportunity to review materials before they are shared publicly.

#### **Accuracy & Integrity**

- Share facts with proper context and avoid sensationalism or distortion.
- Do not oversimplify complex issues or erase the lived realities of communities.

#### **Centre the Voices of Impacted Communities**

- Amplify, rather than speak over.
- Let people tell their own stories in their own words.
- Ensure that local leaders and actors are given visibility and recognition.

#### **Cultural Sensitivity & Decolonial Framing**

- Avoid stereotypes, exploitative imagery, or “saviour” narratives that center outsiders as heroes.
- Respect local customs, power dynamics, and knowledge systems.
- Highlight the collective and community-led nature of actions, rather than individualizing efforts.

## **Transparency & Accountability**

- Be clear about your role (e.g., volunteer, facilitator, NGO worker, journalist).
- Share content back with the community and invite feedback.
- Be open to correction and actively avoid extractive storytelling.

## **Child Protection**

- Children cannot provide informed consent themselves. Even when a parent or guardian consents, avoid identifiable photos or videos of children unless absolutely necessary and ethically justified.
- Children should never be used as “props” or portrayed in ways that make projects or volunteers appear as “saviours.”
- Always prioritize the safety, dignity, and privacy of children in all forms of communication.

## **How to Document and Communicate Local Actions**

### **DO:**

- Always ask permission before recording, filming, or posting content.
- Use collaborative storytelling methods—co-create captions, narratives, and messaging with participants.
- Acknowledge local leadership, history, and cultural context in all communication.
- Share materials back with the community for their use and feedback.
- Ensure all translations are accurate and preserve the original meaning and tone.

### **DON'T:**

- Don't treat people as passive victims or anonymous subjects.
- Don't share content that could endanger activists or vulnerable groups.
- Don't take or share identifiable photos of children. Even with parental consent, avoid using children's images unless essential and ethically justified.
- Don't extract stories without giving something back—such as visibility, resources, or public recognition.



## **DOs & DON'Ts of Communicating on Social & Environmental Justice**

### **DO:**

- Center lived experiences.
- Highlight systems, not just symptoms.
- Use empowering language.
- Check for bias in visuals and words.
- Credit community efforts visibly.

### **DON'T:**

- Centre your organization or yourself.
- Individualize systemic issues.
- Use pitying or dehumanizing language.
- Rely on stereotypes or “trauma porn.”
- Co-opt or generalize the work of communities.

## **How to Credit Communities & Participants Respectfully**

### **Best Practices:**

- Name individuals/communities with consent. Example: “Photo by Fatima N., youth climate leader from Kibera, Nairobi.”
- Use preferred identifiers. Ask: “How would you like to be credited or referred to?”
- Share ownership of media. Offer copies of photos/videos to participants. Tag or mention local groups/organizations.
- Acknowledge collaborative work. Example: “This initiative was co-developed with the Elders Council of the Wet’suwet’en Nation.”

### **Avoid Extractive Crediting:**

- If you use a quote or image, include the context and acknowledge its origin respectfully.
- Avoid presenting it as your “discovery” or creation.

It is essential that anyone contributing to the song, or appearing in any photos or video content, provides their consent. The Media Consent Form can be found in Annex #3 at the end of this document.

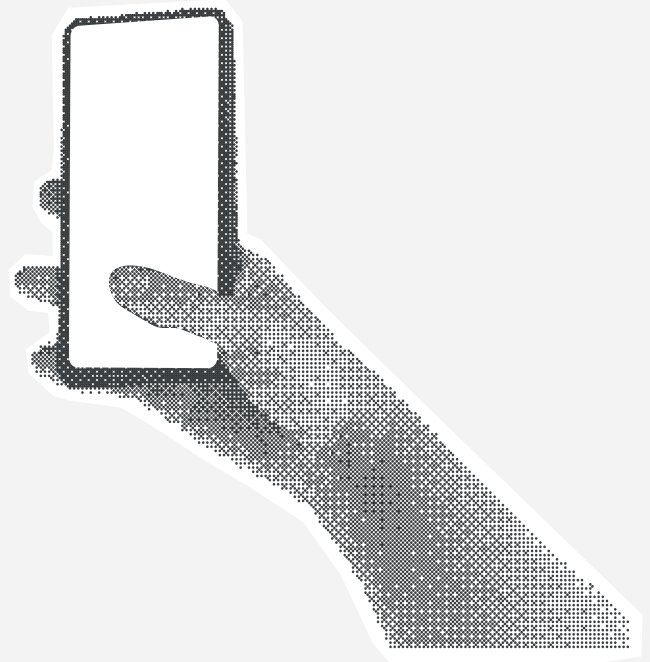
## Social Media Tips

Use the hashtags **#VoicesForChange**, **#MusicForChange**, **#VolunteeringForJustice**, **#DecoloniseIVS**, **#LivingEarth**.

Always credit creators—musicians, photographers, local artists, or community groups.

Connect local actions to global campaigns (e.g., **Living Earth Campaign**, **Volunteer Rights**, **Decolonise IVS**).

Share stories that highlight collective impact and community resilience, not just project outputs.



## 14. Impact Collection & Feedback

Every region of the world, every member of the community, has a significant story to share that brings testimonies of climate and social challenges. **The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique approaches these stories as evidence of the positive change brought by music and volunteering to mobilize peoples and communities for climate action.** It is in this optic that in the first part of the project partners have interrogated local individuals about their challenges: from the struggles of a mother in the Indian tribal communities of Mysore to the possibility of hope in the electronic waste graveyard of once rich Palestinian farmland of Idhna; and from the eco-justice battles of Italian environmental groups to the work of the indigenous Shuar of the Amazons to restore their soil, or that of the community organisers of Pretoria townships to stop littering and improve health. Now come the local actions, and with them the hope of a change made of community understanding, participation and call for action through the emotional and intellectual engagement brought by the music created by the activists.

**Can a song and volunteer local actions really contribute to changing the way we think and behave about our planet?** The new stories collected “after the facts” will give voice to the different perspectives and modalities in which the individual and communities touched by the Local Actions reflect in their personal and collective lives about the new energy brought by the song ‘Echoes of Nature’ and by the concrete steps taken locally through meaningful and participative initiatives. They will help us better understand whether and how the ‘music and lyrics’ of volunteer action make communities feel again that “hope is their ally”, building a resilient collective for nature, “active and alive”!



## THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE TECHNIQUE - WHAT IS IT?

**The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. It involves the collection and selection of stories of change, produced by programme or project stakeholders.**

INTRAC for civil society resumes the essential steps of the technique as:

STEP 1: define domains of change

STEP 2: decide how and when to collect stories

STEP 3: collect significant change stories

STEP 4: select the most significant stories

STEP 5: verify the stories

The original guidelines – available in the online project materials ([https://ccivs.org/voices-for-change/impact-measurement-training/#uagb-tabs\\_tab0](https://ccivs.org/voices-for-change/impact-measurement-training/#uagb-tabs_tab0)) were written by Dr Rick Davies and Dr Jess Dart (2005): The 'Most Significant Change' Technique - A Guide to Its Use, and indicate some of the key reasons why the technique appears to be a meaningful tool to assess the Voice for Change actions. It indicates some key characteristics of the kind of projects that can benefit from the technique, which tend to be projects that, like most IVS activities, are:

- Complex and produce diverse and emergent outcomes
- Large, with numerous organisational layers
- Focused on social change
- Participatory in nature
- Designed with repeated contact between field staff and participants
- Struggling with conventional monitoring systems
- Offering highly customised services to a small number of beneficiaries

**STEP 1 requires DEFINING DOMAINS OF CHALLENGE/CHANGE. Identify, with stakeholders, some domains of change – typically between three and five – that will be monitored / evaluated. Domains are broad areas where change might be expected to occur. For the project, we based the domains on the work done during the Voices for Changes - Global Reflection Meeting, 6-12 April 2025, Versailles, France, and the Volunteer Rights in International Voluntary Service (IVS). (Rights are subject to change based on CCIVS GA decision foreseen in November 2025)**



## Volunteer Rights in International Voluntary Service (IVS)

International Voluntary Service (IVS) participants have the right to...

1. Recognition of learning and contribution
2. Safe, dignified and equitable cross-border participation
3. Recognition of Contributions to Climate and Social Justice
4. Access to Decolonised Funding Ecosystems
5. Safe, Inclusive and Rights-Based Participation
6. Protection in Conflict-Affected and Politically Sensitive Contexts
7. Youth Participation and Intergenerational Governance

STEP 2 concerns deciding on the methods that will be used to identify, record, discuss, select and analyse the stories. Stakeholders are asked what have been the most significant challenges / changes they have experienced or observed within each domain over the past period, and what the storyteller believes is the significance of the events described in the story.

**The different stories are then written down (or recorded or videoed) – either by the stakeholders themselves or by other people on their behalf. Creative and original methods to illustrate stories are very welcome and useful, from photography to drawing, letters or poetry, as long as they are properly documented.**

In STEP 3 stories are collected from those stakeholders most directly involved in a project or programme, such as targeted beneficiaries and project or programme staff.

“Looking back over the last month, what do you think was the most significant challenge/change in ...[particular domain of change]?”

Story

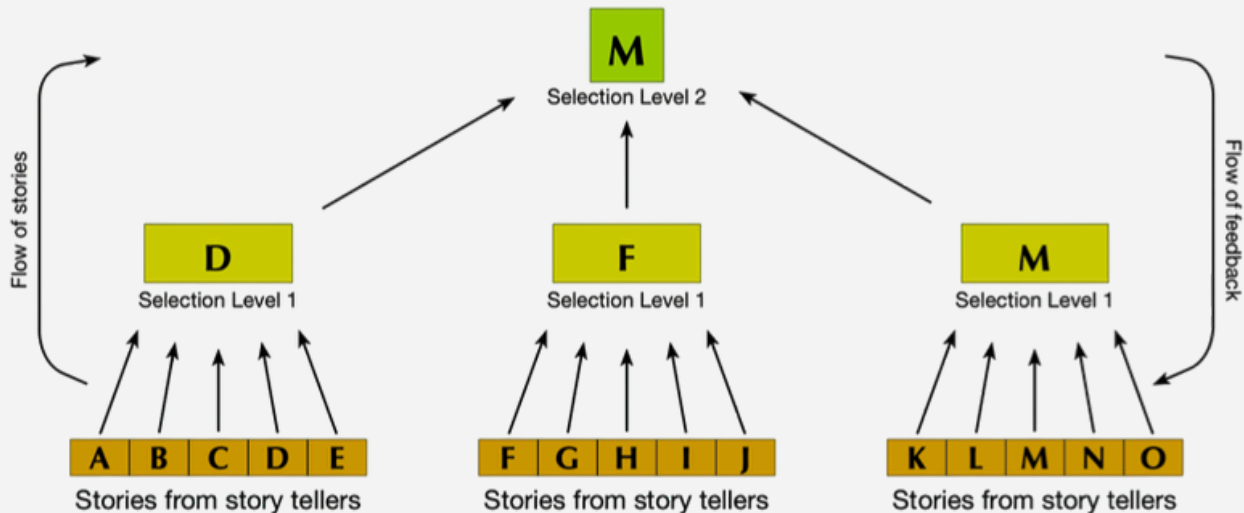
[who did what, when and why]

“Why do you think this story illustrates well the challenge/ change?”

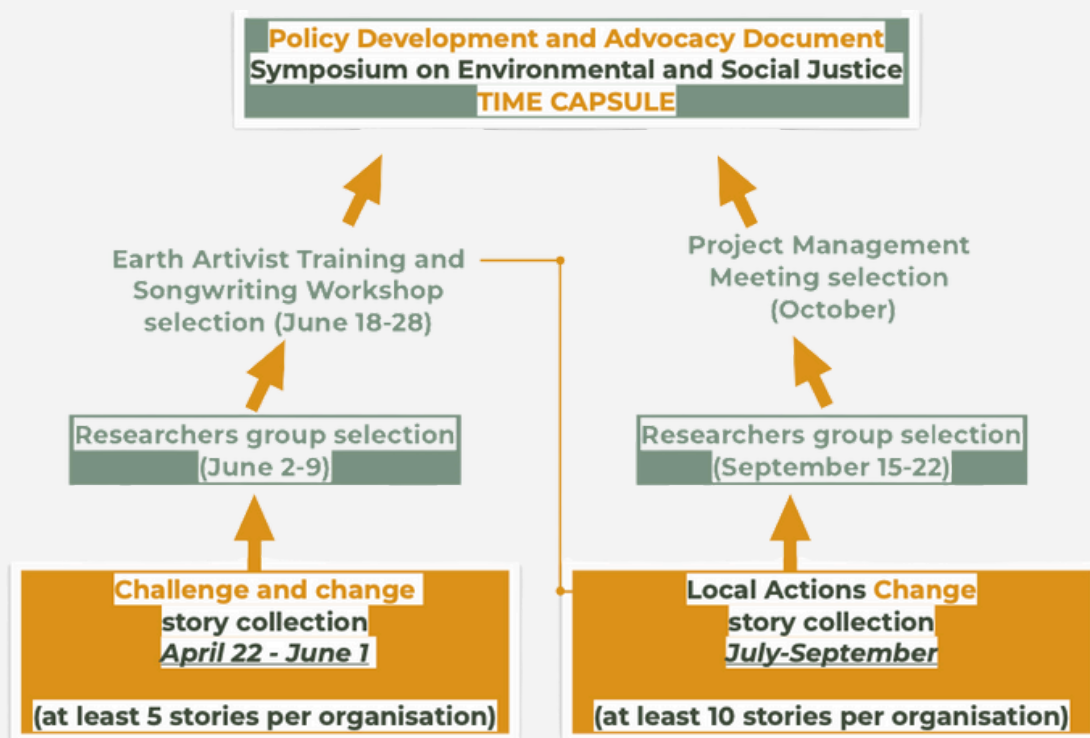
In addition to a description of the story, MSC also requires some further information to be recorded for each story:

- Who provided the story;
- When and where the challenge/change happened;
- What the storyteller believes is the significance of the events described in the story
- What kind of projects were implemented in the place the story refers to

**STEP 4** requires selecting the most significant stories. The typical selection process in the MSC technique involves several sources as well as levels of selection, usually following the organisational / program structure. The graphic by Davies and Dart below illustrate one such possible flow.



In the case of the Voices for Change project, stories go through a double selection process that culminates in the most significant stories being included in the Policy Development and Advocacy Document, the Symposium on Environmental and Social Justice, and the Time capsule.



Always, according to Davies and Dart, “The selection process begins with reading some or all of the stories either out loud or individually. We tend to prefer reading the stories aloud, as it brings the stories to life, but the effectiveness and practicality of this may depend on the context. If the stories have already been allocated to domains, then all the stories from one domain are considered together. Then the reasons for the choice are documented.

Main steps:

- Everybody reads the stories
- The group holds an in-depth conversation about which stories should be chosen
- The group decides which stories are felt to be most significant
- The reason for the group’s choice(s) are documented”

The Food Systems Journal ([foodsystemsjournal.org](http://foodsystemsjournal.org)) also proposes three alternative approaches to story collection:

*Analysis of existing stories:* Your organisation might have already collected stories from your programs and projects; they are “Existing data” and represent an opportunity to study IVS underlying value and preferences, based on the types of success stories you have been actively selecting

***Most Significant Change internal Focus group:*** Your organisation might facilitate a focus group conversation with lead staff and members, asking each person to describe the “most significant change” they had observed over the last year in one or more domains as it related to their work

*Most Significant Change Storytelling Workshop:* Your organisation might integrate a short version of the MSC with various groups into existing meetings and gatherings (still very participatory).

Below is a short step-by-step description of the Storytelling Workshop process:

1. Divide participants into **small groups**, assigned a facilitator to keep track of time, record the conversation, and manage the process.

2. Give a one-page worksheet and ask to reflect individually and write a “5-minute essay” in response to the key question: “Over the last [time period], **what do you think was the most significant challenge/change** in [domain]?”

- What happened
- Why is it important

3. **Share** stories with another (different) small group

4. Each group member reads one story aloud to their group; then the group then **discusses** the qualities of each story and comes to an **agreement** on which of the stories represents the “most significant change” and why.

5. Representatives from each group share with the larger group the single story they have chosen to “lift up” as most significant and **explain why** their group selected that story.

A last but important step is that of verifying the stories, as “Stories could be deliberate fictional accounts, designed to save time or gain recognition, describe real events that have been misunderstood, exaggerate the significance of events.” (Davies and Dart, 2005). Three key moments that require attention for the verification of the stories are in particular:

- When a story is first accepted into the organisation: for example, when a fieldworker documents a change reported to them.
- When a story is communicated beyond the organisation: for example, to donors or the general public.
- When a story is used as the basis for recommending important changes in an organisation’s policies or procedures.

If you would like to learn more about The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique, follow the online training and download the tools used, please click here: [https://ccivs.org/voices-for-change/impact-measurement-training/#uagb-tabs\\_tab0](https://ccivs.org/voices-for-change/impact-measurement-training/#uagb-tabs_tab0)

## 15. Resources & Annexes

### Annexes Include:

1. Lyrics for Echoes of Nature: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-OZ3lxgudSyl08n3T1IEIINQMunL7vizbMfJB55zuSk/edit?tab=t.jvlyh070pk4f>
2. Checklist for community event planning.
3. Media Consent Forms. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1g8Tj4YldXECTSFBdHwsLeLjkQAjuKl20/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=103627538073768275012&rtopof=true&sd=true>
4. Feedback & Reflection Forms.  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wwFwx0AOooWycfYmfcBwYcDqWST\\_wDVJS7H40liGJro/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wwFwx0AOooWycfYmfcBwYcDqWST_wDVJS7H40liGJro/edit?usp=sharing)
5. Participant List Template.
6. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1S7ObxKES3sT8mpLB3RcAw4ME9NH9ZJtm/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=103627538073768275012&rtopof=true&sd=true>
7. Sample Agenda for a 1–2 Day Community Workshop: Icebreakers and Energisers for Creative Sessions.  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-OZ3lxgudSyl08n3T1IEIINQMunL7vizbMfJB55zuSk/edit?tab=t.abqoe2m759jj>
8. Deep Listening & Grounding Exercises <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-OZ3lxgudSyl08n3T1IEIINQMunL7vizbMfJB55zuSk/edit?tab=t.p9t3ayeq0n21>
9. EU Green Deal Discussion Materials <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-OZ3lxgudSyl08n3T1IEIINQMunL7vizbMfJB55zuSk/edit?tab=t.148lydtkczxw>
10. Decolonise Ecology Dialogue Questions <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-OZ3lxgudSyl08n3T1IEIINQMunL7vizbMfJB55zuSk/edit?tab=t.agpbwsh7nvax>

### Additional Resources:

- Volunteer Rights Policy Framework (2025–2027) [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sqOzHllm-i9HT0aZbtIGWnXsXuCG\\_t\\_dcNI7V9QCvU0/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sqOzHllm-i9HT0aZbtIGWnXsXuCG_t_dcNI7V9QCvU0/edit?usp=sharing) (This document is pending validation in the CCIVS GA 2025)
- Decolonise IVS Knowledge Hub: <https://ccivs.org/decolonise>
- Living Earth Campaign: <https://ccivs.org/livingearth>
- CCIVS Living Earth Sustainability Guidelines: <https://ccivs.org/resource/regenerate-reconcile-respect-ccivs-sustainability%E2%81%84living-earth-guidelines/>
- IVS Exchange Guidelines : <https://ccivs.org/ivs-exchange-guidelines>
- Guidelines on Responsible, Ethical and Effective Communication for IVS Organizations: <https://ccivs.org/resource/guidelines-on-responsible-ethical-and-effective-communication-for-ivs-organizations/>
- ICYE Code of Ethical Practice <https://www.icye.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/ICYE-%E2%80%93Code-of-Ethical-Practice-digital.pdf>
- ICYE Safer Together <https://www.icye.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/ICYE-Safer-Together-digital.pdf>
- UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence>
- LIVE-Ex Earth Advocacy Mentorship Programme Toolkit for Youth and Handbook for Youth Workers These guidebooks contain detailed information about Earth advocacy and mentorship, including action planning tools, basic budget templates, facilitator/ mentor tips, advocacy, fundraising and digital exchange platforms.  
<https://ccivs.org/live-ex/resource-hub-and-certification/>



## Facilitators and Toolkit Authors:

Co-author: Kate Curtis (freelance facilitator for CCIVS/ Founder Director of Green Hearted Projects, South Africa)

Co-author: Davide Grosso (Director of Programmes & Partnerships at the International Music Council, Italy/France)



Co-author of the Songwriting Masterclass section and songwriting workshop facilitator: Checkmate Mido - the Dancing Poet, Kenya, <https://linktr.ee/checkmatemido>

Author: section on Impact Measurement: Francesco Volpini, Ryukoku University (Japan)



Editor: Vicky Lovelock

Designer:

Nikkie Päärsoo,

Julieta Blanco



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UNESCO House

1 Rue Miollis, 75015, Paris, France

[www.ccivs.org](http://www.ccivs.org)

✉ [SECRETARIAT@CCIVS.ORG](mailto:SECRETARIAT@CCIVS.ORG)

**f** /SECRETARIATCCIVS

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