

## **Assignment: Social Change Initiative Report**

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### **Abstract / Summary**

Rooted in the Southern African philosophy of Ubuntu, which means "I am because we are," the Xarxa Ubuntu Social Change Initiative was created to foster the inclusion, empowerment, and participation of African and Afro-descendant communities in Catalonia. Developed as part of a Rotary Peace Fellowship at Makerere University, the project directly addresses the persistent underrepresentation of African voices in policymaking, social debates, and institutional dialogues. It champions a proactive and hybrid approach to peacebuilding, recognising that an inclusive society can only be built by amplifying marginalised voices in the very spaces where decisions are made.

At its core, the initiative is built around a dynamic digital hub at [Xarxa Ubuntu](#), a platform designed for sharing resources, amplifying community stories, and fostering connections across diverse actors. Crucially, this digital component is complemented by a commitment to meaningful face-to-face engagement, relying on dialogue and collaboration with both grassroots and institutional partners. The project's main activities included the co-organisation of three key public events: a peace-focused session at the Catalan Parliament, a community football match against hate speech, and a working session at the International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP) to gather proposals for Catalonia's future public peace policy.

Through these diverse collaborations, what began as a personal initiative has evolved into a platform with institutional backing and legitimacy. The support of the ICIP has been instrumental in building trust, reaching a broader audience, and laying a strong foundation for long-term sustainability. Xarxa Ubuntu is now poised to continue beyond its initial framework, ensuring that the work of fostering a more inclusive and peaceful Catalan society endures.

## **Introduction and Background**

In recent decades, the African diaspora in Catalonia has grown significantly, both in numbers and civic visibility. According to the Statistical Institute of Catalonia (IDESCAT, 2024), people of African origin represent over 400,000 residents, with particularly strong communities from Morocco, Senegal, and Gambia. This presence is not only recent: while many arrived in the 1990s and 2000s for economic opportunities, there are now second and even third generations who have been born, raised, and educated in Catalonia, contributing to a diverse and dynamic diaspora. The increase reflects both migration flows and family reunification, as well as the consolidation of communities deeply rooted in Catalan society.

Yet, despite this demographic and cultural presence, structural inequalities persist, ranging from discrimination and racism to a lack of political and institutional representation. Reports from the Spanish Ministry of Equality and the Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination (CEDRE, 2024) highlight that African and Afro-descendant populations continue to experience disproportionate levels of racial profiling by police, barriers in access to housing, and discrimination in the labour market (see also SOS Racisme Catalunya, 2023). These challenges are not new, but they have often been sidelined in broader public discourse, especially in matters related to peace, public policy, and coexistence.

This disconnect highlights a critical gap: the limited presence of African diaspora voices in shaping the narratives, strategies, and institutions that claim to represent social cohesion and inclusive democracy. Ensuring the participation of minorities in democratic processes is not only a matter of justice, but also a condition for building an inclusive and peaceful society. Without the recognition and involvement of all groups, democratic systems risk reproducing exclusion, undermining trust, and missing the opportunity to draw on the full range of experiences and perspectives necessary for sustainable peace.

The Social Change Initiative (SCI), titled *Xarxa Ubuntu*, was born in this context to address the inclusiveness gap. The project was conceptualised during my Rotary Peace Fellowship at Makerere University, as a way to apply the knowledge and tools gained through the program to a real-world setting I know intimately: Barcelona. The aim was to create a space, both digital and physical, for dialogue, recognition, and participation by African and Afro-descendant communities in the region.

The project's name, "Ubuntu," derives from a Southern African philosophy meaning “I am because we are.” It encapsulates values of interconnectedness, community, and mutual care. These principles guided the project’s ethos: building bridges between communities, institutions, and cultures; elevating the voices of those often excluded; and fostering a sense of shared responsibility for peace and inclusion.

At the core of the initiative is the website [www.xarxaubuntu.org](http://www.xarxaubuntu.org), launched as a digital platform to host information, promote events, and share community stories. However, the project rapidly evolved beyond the digital realm. Through partnerships with local institutions and grassroots actors, Xarxa Ubuntu became a community-based process centred on participation, creativity, and collective reflection.

The political context also played a critical role. In 2024, the Catalan government initiated the development of its first public peace policy through a participatory process called the [\*Fòrum Català per la Pau\*](#) (Catalan Forum for Peace). The draft framework of this policy emphasises inclusivity, intercultural dialogue, and the need to address structural inequalities as foundations for building sustainable peace. It highlights the importance of incorporating the perspectives of migrants and minority communities into decision-making, noting that a peaceful society cannot exist without equal recognition and participation of all its members. This approach creates a critical opening for acknowledging the experiences of African and Afro-descendant populations, who often face barriers of racism and underrepresentation in institutional arenas.

For the SCI, this context presented a strategic opportunity for advocacy and engagement. By creating platforms such as policy dialogue meetings, Xarxa Ubuntu directly contributes to the Forum’s objectives of amplifying marginalised voices and fostering civic participation. Aligning its goals with this emerging institutional framework allowed the initiative not only to gain visibility but also to position itself as a bridge between grassroots communities and the public policy process.

Xarxa Ubuntu positioned itself at this intersection between grassroots mobilisation and institutional policy development. It sought to engage the African diaspora not only as recipients of public services but also as legitimate actors in creating a more peaceful and inclusive society.

While there have been other initiatives by members of African descent to engage policymakers in Catalonia and Barcelona—often through NGOs, cultural associations, or advocacy around migration and antiracism—these efforts have tended to be fragmented, episodic, and frequently overlooked in formal political processes. Platforms for sustained dialogue with institutions were limited, and many organisations reported frustration at the lack of access and recognition. Against this backdrop, Xarxa Ubuntu offers a new model: one that is explicitly consultative and collaborative, developed in coordination with an institution like ICIP, and directly tied to the broader participatory framework of the *Fòrum Català per la Pau* (Catalan Forum for Peace). In doing so, it not only amplifies diaspora voices in a more structured way but also demonstrates how inclusive and participatory methods can lead to stronger, more representative outcomes in public policy.

This introduction outlines the historical and political context that made Xarxa Ubuntu possible. It also sets the stage for the subsequent sections, which will detail the problem addressed, the methodology used, and the impact generated through the SCI.

### **Problem Statement**

Despite the growing presence and contributions of African and Afro-descendant communities in Catalonia, their voices remain significantly underrepresented in both institutional decision-making and public discourse. This exclusion is not always intentional but reflects persistent structural and systemic barriers that manifest in both policy frameworks and everyday practices. It points to a broader problem: the endurance of systemic racism, encompassing institutional, cultural, and interpersonal forms of discrimination that limit equal access to rights, visibility, and opportunities for participation.

The problem was evident as the project rolled out. Community members repeatedly emphasised that they do not feel heard or represented, particularly in spaces where social policies or peacebuilding initiatives are defined. They described experiencing daily forms of racism—from unequal treatment in housing, education, and employment to racial profiling, over-policing, and bureaucratic obstacles in documentation. These experiences are compounded by dominant narratives that often portray the African presence in deficit terms, reinforcing stereotypes and overshadowing the assets, resilience, and agency that these communities bring to Catalan society.

One of the clearest manifestations of this exclusion has been the limited participation of African and Afro-descendant voices—especially those from non-elite and younger generations—in the development of Catalonia’s first public peace policy. Despite being among the communities most directly affected by social conflict, marginalisation, and systemic injustice, their perspectives were largely absent from the institutional process. Without intentional efforts to ensure inclusion, any resulting policy risks reproducing the very inequities it seeks to overcome.

The SCI responds to this gap by creating platforms where African and Afro-descendant individuals can contribute their visions, experiences, and proposals. It also aims to challenge institutional silences and build bridges between grassroots voices and policy spaces. Addressing racism and exclusion is not only a matter of justice—it is also a prerequisite for creating a peaceful and cohesive society in Catalonia.

## **Goals and Objectives**

The overarching goal of Xarxa Ubuntu is to foster inclusion, recognition, and participation of African and Afro-descendant communities in Catalonia through a hybrid approach that combines digital engagement with in-person activities. The project aims to create spaces where community members can take the lead in shaping the public conversation on peace, coexistence, and justice.

The specific objectives are as follows:

1. **To establish a digital platform** that gathers information, amplifies community voices, and serves as a hub for events, resources, and collaboration among organisations working on inclusion and peace. Digital storytelling has been a central feature of this platform, including news articles, interviews, and testimonies that highlight the lived experiences, resilience, and contributions of African and Afro-descendant individuals. So far, these outputs have included a series of articles and interviews published on the Xarxa Ubuntu website, as well as coverage of key events such as the football match against hate speech and the June 19th policy dialogue session. Together, they provide visibility to underrepresented voices and serve as a resource for organisations and institutions interested in antiracism and inclusion.

2. **To facilitate dialogue and connection** among African and Afro-descendant individuals, as well as between these communities and wider Catalan society, through events and participatory sessions.
3. **To contribute concrete proposals from the diaspora** to the development of Catalonia's first public peace policy. The participatory process of the *Fòrum Català per la Pau* (Catalan Forum for Peace) began in 2024 and is still under review, with contributions being consolidated into a forthcoming *Plan Director País de Pau* (Master Plan for Peace). The SCI has aligned with this timeline by providing input through sessions such as "*Veus Africanes per la Pau*" (*African Voices for Peace*), ensuring that the ideas, concerns, and aspirations of the diaspora are reflected in this foundational document.
4. **To build bridges between institutional spaces and community actors**, leveraging the fellow's position at the International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP) to align the SCI with broader institutional agendas without losing grassroots authenticity.
5. **To foster sustainable collaboration**, promoting ownership of the initiative among local partners and community groups to ensure continuity beyond the timeline of the fellowship.

These objectives reflect a pragmatic and dynamic approach, combining long-term vision with short-term, tangible activities. While digital storytelling was the initial entry point, the initiative grew to include co-organised events and participatory processes that deepened its reach and impact. Ultimately, the project aims to contribute to a cultural and institutional shift in how inclusion, racism, and peace are understood and addressed in Catalonia.

### **Challenges and Mitigation Strategies**

Implementing the Social Change Initiative was not without its complexities, starting with the fundamental challenge of establishing meaningful contact with individuals and community organisations. As an independent actor, my initial outreach efforts sometimes went unanswered or received lukewarm responses. It quickly became evident that approaching community leaders as a white person working on issues of racism and African diaspora

inclusion could be met with scepticism or mistrust. This dynamic was further shaped by the growing public discourse in Catalonia around antiracism and the crucial need to move beyond symbolic gestures toward concrete, systemic change. It was clear that to gain credibility, I had to demonstrate a genuine, long-term commitment to authentic community engagement.

To overcome this, a strategic decision was made to leverage the institutional credibility of the International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP), where I work. While the ICIP had a history of engaging with diasporas, it had not explicitly focused on African communities in Catalonia. By situating the initiative within an established institution, the project gained instant visibility and legitimacy. This affiliation opened doors and fostered the trust necessary to forge effective collaborations with grassroots stakeholders.

Another significant challenge was navigating the inherent tension between institutional processes and grassroots dynamics. While institutions operate on slower, more procedural timelines, community engagement demands immediacy, flexibility, and a foundation of relational trust. Balancing these speeds required an adaptive approach, including informal conversations, bilingual communications, and a commitment to building relationships over time rather than rushing toward immediate outcomes.

The sensitive nature of racism in Catalonia also presented a challenge. Some organisations preferred to frame discussions in general terms of diversity or inclusion, which risked diluting the project's specific focus on anti-Blackness and the structural legacies of colonialism. However, we also recognised the positive momentum of the growing public discourse, reflected in initiatives like the development of an inclusive public peace policy and grassroots-led campaigns such as the antiracist race organised by Top Manta. The SCI initiative strategically aligned with this movement, emphasising a clear purpose while remaining open to coalition-building with a wide range of actors, thereby both supporting and complementing the broader push for structural change.

The project's connection with the ongoing development of Catalonia's public peace policy presented a dual challenge and opportunity. On one hand, the policy process's timeline created external pressures. On the other hand, it provided a concrete institutional entry point for advocacy. Aligning project milestones with the Catalan Peace Forum was crucial in ensuring the initiative's relevance and visibility.

Lastly, the long-term sustainability of the website, [www.xarxaubuntu.org](http://www.xarxaubuntu.org), presented a tangible challenge. Maintaining it as a solo project has made consistent content updates difficult. For the platform to thrive, it is essential to seek collaborators—such as community writers or partner organisations—who can share responsibility for content creation and curation. This would not only improve the sustainability of the platform but also embody the project’s core goal of community ownership.

Through these strategies, the initiative overcame early barriers and cultivated the relationships necessary to co-organise impactful events and gather meaningful contributions from African communities. These adaptive approaches have reinforced the project’s sustainability and rooted it firmly within both community and institutional contexts.

## **SECTION 2**

### **Literature Review**

The academic and practitioner literature on diaspora inclusion, peacebuilding, and anti-racism provides critical insights for understanding and situating the Xarxa Ubuntu initiative. Central to this body of work is the recognition that peace is not merely the absence of conflict but a condition rooted in justice, representation, and inclusion (Galtung, 1969; Lederach, 1997). The concept of “positive peace” suggests that sustainable social cohesion requires dismantling structures of violence, including those embedded in racism, xenophobia, and exclusionary policies.

Within the European context, scholars such as Fassin (2011) and El-Tayeb (2011) have documented how racialised communities often face both explicit and subtle forms of marginalisation, particularly in nations that frame themselves as “colorblind.” In Spain, researchers including Giménez Romero (2021) and SOS Racisme (2022) highlight the persistence of institutional racism in housing, education, and policing. Studies and monitoring reports consistently show that while multiple racialised groups experience discrimination, African and Afro-descendant populations are disproportionately affected. For example, they face higher rates of police profiling, greater barriers to secure housing, and lower employment opportunities compared to other minority groups (CEDRE, 2024). These findings align closely with the experiences reported by African and Afro-descendant communities in Catalonia, underscoring the urgency of initiatives like Xarxa Ubuntu.

One valuable contribution to the practical dimensions of allyship and antiracist engagement is the recent book *Ponte a punto para el antirracismo: Consejos útiles para iniciar la alianza antirracista* (*Get Ready for Anti-Racism: Helpful Tips for Starting an Anti-Racist Ally*) by Desirée Bela-Lobedde (2023). The book offers clear, actionable insights for individuals and institutions seeking to become active antiracist allies. It has informed the project's communication strategies and its approach to addressing scepticism or resistance when discussing racial justice issues in mixed settings.

In the realm of community mobilisation, Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) framework emphasises the importance of identifying and leveraging existing community strengths rather than focusing solely on needs or deficits. This approach has influenced the design of the SCI by centring the knowledge, leadership, and resilience already present within African diaspora communities in Catalonia.

In terms of digital engagement, authors such as Castells (2012) and Jenkins (2006) stress the potential of networked platforms to amplify marginalised voices, promote horizontal forms of participation, and bypass traditional gatekeepers. Xarxa Ubuntu's website was designed with these principles in mind, functioning as both a repository of resources and a tool for visibility and advocacy.

Finally, the field of policy advocacy underscores the importance of strategic positioning and timing. Kingdon's (1995) "Multiple Streams Framework" suggests that change becomes possible when problems, policies, and politics align. The emergence of the *Fòrum Català per la Pau* (Catalan Forum for Peace) provided such a "policy window" that the SCI was able to leverage, translating community engagement into institutional relevance.

Taken together, this diverse literature offers both theoretical grounding and practical guidance for the design and implementation of Xarxa Ubuntu. It validates the initiative's core premises: that inclusion is essential for peace, that community voices must shape public discourse, and that digital and in-person strategies can be combined to advance systemic change.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

The Xarxa Ubuntu initiative is grounded in an interdisciplinary set of frameworks that converge around peacebuilding, anti-racism, postcolonial studies, and participatory

democracy. At its core lies the recognition that peace is inseparable from justice, and that sustainable peace requires structural transformation, not merely conflict mitigation. These frameworks not only offer theoretical grounding but also provide practical guidance for the initiative.

One foundation is Johan Galtung's concept of positive peace, first introduced in 1969. Positive peace refers not only to the absence of war or direct violence but also to the presence of fairness, equity, and inclusion in social life. Galtung also described the idea of structural violence, meaning the harm caused when social, political, or economic arrangements systematically disadvantage certain groups. This perspective is crucial in the Catalan context. Although there is no armed conflict, African and Afro-descendant communities experience daily forms of systemic exclusion. Housing discrimination, precarious employment, racial profiling by police, and limited political representation are all examples of how structural inequality undermines the possibility of genuine peace.

Xarxa Ubuntu adopts this lens by working to dismantle barriers and foster conditions where marginalised communities can thrive and contribute to public life. The initiative treats peace not as the absence of conflict but as the creation of just arrangements in which dignity and equality are guaranteed. In practical terms, this means amplifying African voices in policymaking, legitimising cultural practices that have often been silenced, and recognising the importance of memory and justice in building a more equitable society.

The work is also shaped by John Paul Lederach's theory of conflict transformation. Lederach argued that peacebuilding must move beyond short-term fixes to address the deeper relational, cultural, and structural dimensions of conflict. His emphasis on the moral imagination—the capacity to envision new possibilities of coexistence—resonates strongly with the spirit of Xarxa Ubuntu. The initiative embodies this by creating opportunities for dialogue between community members and institutions, and by opening spaces where African and Afro-descendant voices can be recognised as legitimate contributors to public policy.

Lederach also stressed the importance of multi-level engagement, bringing together grassroots voices, middle-range actors, and political leaders. Xarxa Ubuntu reflects this approach by convening community members, diaspora leaders, and institutional representatives in the same spaces. In doing so, it connects lived experiences of exclusion

with the formal arenas of policymaking. Rather than aiming for quick results, the initiative prioritises the slower, relational work of trust-building. Transformation is understood not as a one-time achievement, but as a long-term process of cultivating relationships that can withstand tension and disagreement.

Postcolonial thought further informs the project's critique of institutional exclusion. Writers such as Frantz Fanon and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o have shown how colonial legacies continue to shape politics, culture, and identity today. Institutions and narratives often carry forward Eurocentric assumptions, which frame African communities in deficit terms. Xarxa Ubuntu responds to these insights by creating spaces where African narratives and practices are valued in Catalonia. This approach challenges Eurocentric frames, exposes how historical silences structure modern institutions, and makes visible how colonial hierarchies still shape public policy and social perceptions. In this sense, the project is not only corrective but also creative. It seeks to imagine new forms of belonging and participation in which African and Afro-descendant voices are central to society.

Intersectionality adds another essential dimension to the initiative. Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework highlights how race, gender, class, and migration status interact to shape experiences of exclusion. Marginalisation does not occur in isolation, but through the overlap of multiple systems of oppression. This is especially evident in Catalonia, where African women often face numerous vulnerabilities as migrants, racialised workers in precarious labour sectors, and primary caregivers within their families. These intersecting identities compound barriers and make their voices particularly significant. Xarxa Ubuntu has therefore been intentional about elevating these perspectives. Participation has not been restricted to a single representative of the "African community." Instead, the project reflects diverse realities, ensuring that women, youth, and people with varied migration backgrounds all contribute to shaping the agenda.

The initiative is also inspired by ideas of deliberative democracy, which emphasise the role of inclusive dialogue in political life. For democracy to be meaningful, marginalised groups must be able to deliberate on issues that affect them and to have their contributions taken seriously in policymaking. This perspective resonates strongly with the approach of Xarxa Ubuntu. The initiative created forums where African and Afro-descendant communities could directly discuss peace and inclusion, and contribute concrete proposals to Catalonia's first public peace policy. Notably, the methodology recognised that democratic dialogue is not

confined to technical reports or formal speeches. Storytelling, testimony, and art were treated as valid and powerful forms of political expression. By broadening the definition of what counts as participation, the initiative demonstrated how non-traditional forms of expression can enrich policymaking and bring new legitimacy to public institutions.

Another influence is the field of digital activism. Scholars such as Clay Shirky and Zeynep Tufekci have argued that online platforms can disrupt hierarchies and enable new forms of civic participation. Digital tools allow communities to bypass traditional gatekeepers, amplify their voices, and mobilise support across borders. Xarxa Ubuntu's website was designed with these principles in mind. It functions both as a repository of resources and as a symbolic platform that affirms the presence of African and Afro-descendant communities in Catalonia. By publishing articles, interviews, and event coverage, the site has created visibility for communities often ignored in mainstream media.

At the same time, the initiative recognises the limits of digital tools. Not all community members have equal access to technology, and online engagement alone cannot dismantle structural exclusion. For this reason, Xarxa Ubuntu combines digital visibility with offline activities such as dialogues, workshops, and community events. This hybrid model ensures that visibility is translated into real participation and that ownership rests with the communities themselves.

Taken together, these perspectives shape and validate the strategy of Xarxa Ubuntu. Positive peace highlights the need to dismantle structural violence. Conflict transformation underlines the relational and imaginative aspects of peacebuilding. Postcolonial thought calls for recognition of African narratives and the decolonisation of institutions. Intersectionality ensures that diverse identities and realities are included. Deliberative democracy stresses the importance of inclusive and culturally varied forms of participation. And digital activism provides tools for visibility and mobilisation.

By bringing these frameworks into dialogue with the lived experiences of African and Afro-descendant communities, Xarxa Ubuntu works toward a society where peace is not only declared but actively built through justice, inclusion, and shared humanity. Rooted in both theory and practice, the initiative offers a replicable model for how diasporic voices can meaningfully shape public policies of peace in Catalonia and beyond.

## Change Theory and How It Was Applied

The design and implementation of the Xarxa Ubuntu Social Change Initiative (SCI) were guided by a commitment to participatory, community-based, and adaptive methodologies. Given the project's emphasis on inclusion, visibility, and empowerment of the African diaspora in Catalonia, the methods chosen prioritised accessibility, collaboration, and responsiveness to community input. The SCI evolved organically from a digital-first intervention into a multidimensional initiative combining online and offline strategies.

The project began with the creation of a digital hub—[www.xarxaubuntu.org](http://www.xarxaubuntu.org)—that served as both a repository and a launchpad for community engagement. The website was designed using WordPress for its flexibility, accessibility, and user-friendly content management. It features news articles, interviews, event summaries, and links to resources relevant to the African diaspora. The website provided an initial platform for raising visibility and consolidating a narrative space that affirmed the presence and contributions of African and Afro-descendant individuals in Catalonia.

To complement the online component, the SCI employed a face-to-face engagement strategy centred around community listening and collaboration. This included direct outreach to community leaders, organisations, and activists. Meetings, informal conversations, and participatory planning sessions were used to identify key concerns, needs, and opportunities. One of the early methodological realisations was that trust and legitimacy were essential; therefore, the project leveraged the institutional affiliation with the International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP) to open doors and generate credibility.

A cornerstone of the offline strategy was the organisation of public events that created space for dialogue and participation. These included:

- **The January session at the Catalan Parliament** titled “*Perspectives africanes de pau, polítiques i pràctiques*” (*African perspectives on peace, policies, and practices*) was held on **31 January 2025**. This event brought together parliamentarians, experts, and representatives of the African diaspora to discuss the role of African voices in shaping Catalonia's peace policy.
- **A symbolic football match against hate speech**, organised on **18 June 2025**, to commemorate the International Day Against Hate Speech. The game, co-organised

with Street Soccer Barcelona and Top Manta, highlighted sport as a tool for inclusion, anti-racism, and community resilience.

- **A working session at ICIP on 19 June 2025**, which focused on collecting concrete proposals from African and Afro-descendant communities to contribute directly to the ongoing Catalan public peace policy process.

These events were co-created with partner organisations and community members, ensuring that the activities reflected the values and voices of those involved. Participatory methodologies—such as group discussions, open dialogues, and thematic roundtables—were used to foster inclusive, respectful, and productive exchanges.

Data collection was primarily qualitative. Field notes, participant observations, and feedback from collaborators informed the adaptation of project activities over time. Instead of rigid evaluation metrics, the SCI emphasised iterative learning, relational accountability, and responsiveness to community feedback.

This flexible and grounded design enabled Xarxa Ubuntu to meet community members where they were, build momentum through shared ownership, and adapt to both opportunities and challenges. The chosen methods supported the SCI's overall aim: to mobilise the African diaspora not just as subjects of support, but as agents of social and political transformation in Catalonia.

## **SECTION 3**

### **Intervention and Activities**

The interventions and activities carried out under the Xarxa Ubuntu SCI were designed to connect directly with the initiative's stated objectives: increasing visibility of the African diaspora in Catalonia, promoting inclusive narratives, fostering participation in peacebuilding processes, and building sustainable alliances with community and institutional actors.

The project's initial intervention was the creation and continuous development of the digital platform [www.xarxaubuntu.org](http://www.xarxaubuntu.org). This site was envisioned as a central hub to collect, produce

and share content related to African and Afro-descendant experiences in Catalonia. The website functions not only as a repository of information but as a dynamic space for amplifying underrepresented voices. Its development also allowed the SCI to map existing community initiatives, spotlight relevant events, and provide visibility to narratives that challenge marginalisation. Thanks to an automatic translation service, the site—originally written in Spanish—can also be accessed in Catalan, English, French, and Arabic, making its content more accessible to a broader and more diverse audience.

The website also served as a launchpad for storytelling as a core activity. By publishing articles on African cinema, community events, anti-racist mobilisations, and interviews with members of the diaspora, Xarxa Ubuntu created a counter-narrative space. This intervention reinforced the idea that visibility is a precondition for recognition, and that stories—when owned and shared by communities themselves—become tools for empowerment.

Complementing the digital strategy were three key face-to-face interventions. The first was the public event held in the Catalan Parliament on January 31st, 2025, titled “*Perspectives africanes de pau, polítiques i pràctiques (African peace perspectives, policies and practices)*.” This institutional space became the launching point for a broader discussion about the role of African communities in public peace policies. The SCI played a key role in shaping this agenda and ensuring that community voices were heard and respected.

The second major intervention was a symbolic football match organised on June 18th, 2025, for the International Day Against Hate Speech. Titled “*L’odi no xuta: Futbol per la convivència (Hate doesn't kick: Football for coexistence)*,” the event brought together organisations such as Street Soccer Barcelona, Top Manta, and Novact, with the support of ICIP and the football club CE Europa. The activity combined sport, dialogue, and visibility. A roundtable discussion explored the role of sport in promoting social cohesion and combating racism. The game itself was designed as a celebration of diversity, featuring mixed teams that included migrants, activists, and local players. This playful but politically charged intervention showed that inclusive peacebuilding could take informal and accessible forms.

The third intervention was a working session held on June 19th, 2025, at the ICIP headquarters, aimed at gathering concrete proposals from African and Afro-descendant community members for inclusion in the future Catalan public peace policy. The event “*Veus Africanes per la Pau (African Voices for Peace)*” followed up on the Parliament session and

was framed within the participatory process of the *Fòrum Català per la Pau* (Catalan Forum for Peace). Participants were invited to identify challenges and solutions across three thematic areas: political and social participation, antiracism and decolonisation, and community-based conflict resolution. The outputs of these dialogues will feed directly into policy recommendations being developed by the Catalan government.

These interventions were not isolated. They were interlinked and sequenced to reinforce each other. The Parliament event opened the door to institutional engagement; the football match demonstrated the capacity to mobilise communities through creativity; the working session deepened dialogue and structured it into actionable policy content. Together, they illustrate a holistic and adaptive strategy for change.

The SCI also implemented informal interventions that were critical to its success, including regular meetings with community members, presentations in smaller forums, social media engagement, and WhatsApp-based outreach. These channels enabled the initiative to maintain constant dialogue with its base, ensuring responsiveness and co-ownership.

Institutional collaboration was another significant component. By embedding the SCI within the ICIP, the initiative leveraged the institute's credibility, resources, and network. This partnership allowed for logistical support in event organisation, amplification of communications, and alignment with broader institutional goals related to peace and inclusion. Crucially, it also signalled to other actors—especially those unfamiliar or hesitant—that the SCI had institutional backing and a long-term vision.

Finally, the interventions were designed with sustainability in mind. By creating an open-access website and nurturing relationships with partner organisations, the project laid the groundwork for future activities and collaborations. Some activities—such as the football match or the engagement with the public peace policy—have already led to discussions about repetition or scaling.

In sum, the interventions carried out through Xarxa Ubuntu were rooted in a theory of change that prioritised visibility, dialogue, and participation. They connected online storytelling with offline mobilisation, institutional policy with grassroots energy. They allowed the SCI to act as both a platform and a connector, linking people, ideas, and institutions toward a shared vision of justice and peace.

## **Key Findings / Impact**

The interventions implemented through the Xarxa Ubuntu SCI produced a series of meaningful and measurable impacts, both in terms of community engagement and institutional recognition. The combination of digital visibility, face-to-face events, and strategic alliances contributed significantly to achieving the initiative's core objectives.

One of the most evident outcomes was the successful creation of a digital platform that now serves as a space for disseminating stories, reflections, and events related to the African diaspora in Catalonia. The Xarxa Ubuntu website is a reality and aims to be a reference point for activists, organisations, and institutions seeking to learn more about diaspora initiatives or amplify their voices. Through regular updates, storytelling articles, and curated content, the platform strengthens a sense of connection and visibility among its users. For example, the website has published personal testimonies and event coverage that highlight the resilience of African communities and their contributions to Catalan society.

The initiative also demonstrated the importance and effectiveness of hybrid engagement. Events such as the Parliament session in January 2025 and the June 19th working group at ICIP served as tangible entry points for institutional listening and inclusion. These spaces allowed representatives of the diaspora to contribute directly to the policy-making process of Catalonia's peace policy—an unprecedented step in acknowledging the knowledge and experiences of historically marginalised communities.

The football match organised on June 18, 2025, for the International Day Against Hate Speech illustrated the potential of creative, informal formats to mobilise diverse audiences and generate public awareness. The activity drew the attention of local media and community actors, reinforcing the idea that peacebuilding is not limited to formal political arenas but can also take place through popular culture and sports. Football has been widely recognised as a tool for peace and social cohesion in other contexts as well, from *Football for Peace* initiatives supported by the United Nations to symbolic cases like *Ping-Pong diplomacy*, where sport created opportunities for dialogue between nations in conflict. By situating itself within this tradition, Xarxa Ubuntu shows how locally rooted activities can contribute to global conversations about peacebuilding through sport.

Another significant impact was the level of collaboration achieved with partner organisations. By linking the SCI to the ICIP and engaging with other actors such as Street Soccer

Barcelona, Novact, and Top Manta, Xarxa Ubuntu gained credibility, widened its network, and anchored its interventions in broader movements for justice and inclusion. This approach ensured that activities were not isolated events but part of a larger, sustained ecosystem of change.

Perhaps most importantly, the project reinforced the value of trust-building and long-term engagement. Participants in events often expressed gratitude for being heard and included in the decision-making process. Many noted that such opportunities were rare and that they usually felt excluded from institutional conversations. The SCI responded to this need by creating spaces that valued experience, honoured identity, and encouraged contribution.

The decision to situate the SCI within an institutional framework, while retaining its grassroots character, proved essential. It enabled the project to gain access to resources, political relevance, and future continuity. Several of the events organised under the SCI—such as the football match and the peace policy consultations—are now being considered for future editions, suggesting that the project has generated momentum beyond its original scope.

In summary, the findings of the Xarxa Ubuntu SCI underscore the transformative potential of initiatives rooted in community voices yet connected to institutional frameworks. By blending digital storytelling, participatory events, and coalition-building, the project successfully generated visibility, trust, and policy influence. These impacts not only validate the initial design of the SCI but also point toward sustainable models for inclusive peacebuilding in multicultural contexts, such as Catalonia.

## **SECTION 4**

### **General Conclusion**

The Xarxa Ubuntu Social Change Initiative (SCI) set out to address the lack of visibility, participation, and recognition of African and Afro-descendant communities in Catalonia's public life. Through a blend of digital presence, community-driven storytelling, and participatory events, the project has contributed to fostering a more inclusive, connected, and representative ecosystem for peacebuilding and social cohesion.

One of the most valuable takeaways from this experience is the confirmation that visibility and trust are the foundation for meaningful community engagement. The creation of a digital platform and the celebration of informal but powerful events—such as a football match against hate speech—showed that inclusive narratives can reach broader audiences and open doors to deeper conversations. At the same time, positioning the initiative within an institutional framework, through collaboration with ICIP, proved crucial in building credibility and ensuring continuity.

Equally important was the emphasis on listening. By centring voices that are often excluded from institutional processes, Xarxa Ubuntu demonstrated that peacebuilding must begin with recognition and dialogue. The events organised within the framework of the *Fòrum Català per la Pau* (Catalan Forum for Peace) allowed members of the diaspora to formulate concrete proposals and claim a space in shaping public policy, moving from symbolic inclusion to active participation.

The SCI has thus laid the groundwork for a sustained and collaborative approach to community engagement, where institutions and grassroots actors can work hand in hand. It has also underscored the importance of humility, flexibility, and responsiveness in working with diverse communities, particularly when addressing structural issues such as racism and historical exclusion.

### **Recommendations / Implications for Policy**

The Xarxa Ubuntu Social Change Initiative (SCI) has generated a series of insights and concrete proposals that can inform the development of inclusive, antiracist public policies in Catalonia. Rooted in Ubuntu philosophy and grounded in direct community engagement, the initiative demonstrates that policy cannot be truly transformative without the active participation of those who have been historically excluded from institutional processes.

The project employs a multiple-strategy approach, combining digital storytelling, community mapping, informal gatherings (such as the football match against hate speech), and formal dialogue spaces (like the session “*Veus Africanes per la Pau*” (*African Voices for Peace*)), to listen, amplify, and structure the demands of African and Afro-descendant communities. From the event on June 19th, 2025, several policy ideas emerged:

1. Institutionalise Antiracist and Decolonial Education: the revision of school curricula to include African and Afro-descendant histories, cultural contributions, and critical reflection on colonial legacies. Education policy must involve affected communities and address systemic bias from early childhood.
2. Create Sustainable Channels for Participation: Participation that transcends symbolic consultation. Government institutions should establish structured, resourced, and ongoing consultation mechanisms that enable racialised communities to contribute to public policy in areas such as peacebuilding, integration, housing, and justice.
3. Support Community-Based Conflict Resolution Models: Incorporating African practices such as “Ubuntu” into local mediation and restorative justice programs can enrich existing mechanisms, especially in diverse neighbourhoods that experience intercultural tensions.
4. Adopt a Cross-Cutting Antiracist Strategy in Government: A transversal antiracist agenda must be embedded in all public policies. This includes mandatory training for civil servants, the incorporation of equity indicators in program evaluation, and accountability mechanisms that incorporate community oversight.
5. Recognise Afro-descendant Contributions to Peace and Justice: Institutional awards, recognitions, and public narratives should reflect the diversity of Catalan society and highlight the work of Afro-descendant peacebuilders, especially women and youth.
6. Rethink International Cooperation Policies: Cooperation strategies should shift from charity-based approaches to horizontal, justice-based partnerships with African civil society organisations, emphasising mutual learning and long-term sustainability.
7. Make African Conflicts Visible in Public Debate: Institutions and media must take responsibility for addressing the “invisible conflicts” of Africa and the global systems that sustain them, such as extractivism and neocolonial trade relations.
8. Guarantee Protection and Support for Victims of Institutional Racism: Establish local systems of legal aid, psychosocial support, and public redress for individuals who have experienced racist treatment in policing, education, health care, or administration.

These recommendations were not developed in isolation, nor do they stem solely from a single individual or theoretical reflection. They are the direct result of the collective work carried out during the session “*Veus Africanes per la Pau*” (*African Voices for Peace*) on June 19th, 2025, a space specifically designed to gather ideas from African and Afro-descendant

communities for the future Catalan public peace policy. The SCI's strength lies precisely in its ability to combine community energy with institutional dialogue, informal gatherings with policy advocacy, and personal narratives with structural critique. It reminds us that peace is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice, and justice begins by listening.

## **Sustainability Plan**

Ensuring the sustainability of the Xarxa Ubuntu Social Change Initiative (SCI) has been a priority throughout its development. Aware that many valuable projects disappear after a first phase due to a lack of continuity or structural support, this initiative has taken modest but thoughtful steps to remain active and impactful beyond the Rotary fellowship.

### **1. Institutional Link with ICIP**

One of the most significant factors contributing to the project's continuity has been the possibility of linking it to the International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP), where the fellow works. While Xarxa Ubuntu started as a personal project, it became clear that meaningful collaboration, especially on sensitive topics such as racism and inclusion, required greater institutional support to foster trust. Integrating the SCI into ICIP's existing line of work with diasporas has made it easier to open doors, consolidate partnerships, and align with broader public debates such as the *Fòrum Català per la Pau* (Catalan Forum for Peace). Importantly, ICIP has now committed to ensuring that meetings and dialogue spaces with African and Afro-descendant communities will continue to be organised regularly. This ongoing engagement strengthens institutional legitimacy, guarantees continuity, and provides the diaspora with structured opportunities to influence future peacebuilding and inclusion policies in Catalonia.

### **2. Digital Platform and Public Presence**

The creation of the [www.xarxaubuntu.org](http://www.xarxaubuntu.org) website, developed with Rotary support, has provided a simple yet valuable tool for enhancing visibility and continuity. It gathers resources, events, and community voices in one place, serving as a hub to keep the initiative alive digitally. While still modest in scope, it will continue to be updated with news, interviews, and outcomes of future activities.

### **3. Community Involvement**

The project's sustainability depends mainly on its relevance to the people it intends to serve. From the start, efforts have been made to involve community members in events, discussions, and strategic planning. Events like the June 19th session on peace policy have helped identify engaged individuals and build bridges. The intention moving forward is to nurture these relationships and gradually form a small advisory group composed of community members and partners.

### **4. Collaboration with Like-Minded Initiatives**

Partnerships with Street Soccer Barcelona, Top Manta, Novact and other civil society actors have provided essential energy and credibility. Rather than working in isolation, Xarxa Ubuntu has aligned itself with existing initiatives that promote inclusion and justice. These collaborations are expected to continue, expanding to include schools, youth groups, researchers, and other relevant platforms.

### **5. Funding and Resources**

At this stage, Xarxa Ubuntu has no dedicated budget; however, its future sustainability will depend on securing resources. ICIP's access to local budget could provide funding opportunities, and informal conversations with other partners suggest a willingness to co-organise future events. Small-scale fundraising actions and partnerships with ethical businesses could also be explored.

### **6. Capacity Building**

A long-term aspiration is to offer workshops and tools to support others who want to mobilise their communities or explore digital storytelling as a means of creating change. These efforts are still in an early phase, but could help spread the spirit of Xarxa Ubuntu to other spaces, both locally and internationally.

### **7. Reflection and Accountability**

Although no formal monitoring framework is currently in place, the project will continue to gather informal feedback from participants and partners. Keeping track of challenges, achievements, and lessons learned will help shape the future direction of the initiative. The

idea is to remain open and responsive, adapting over time in response to evolving needs and community input.

Xarxa Ubuntu is still a small and evolving initiative, but the steps taken so far aim to build a foundation for continuity. Its future will depend on the continued involvement of the community, the support of partner organisations, and the ability to remain relevant. While many challenges lie ahead, the intention is to keep learning, adapting, and contributing—however modestly—to a more inclusive and peaceful society.

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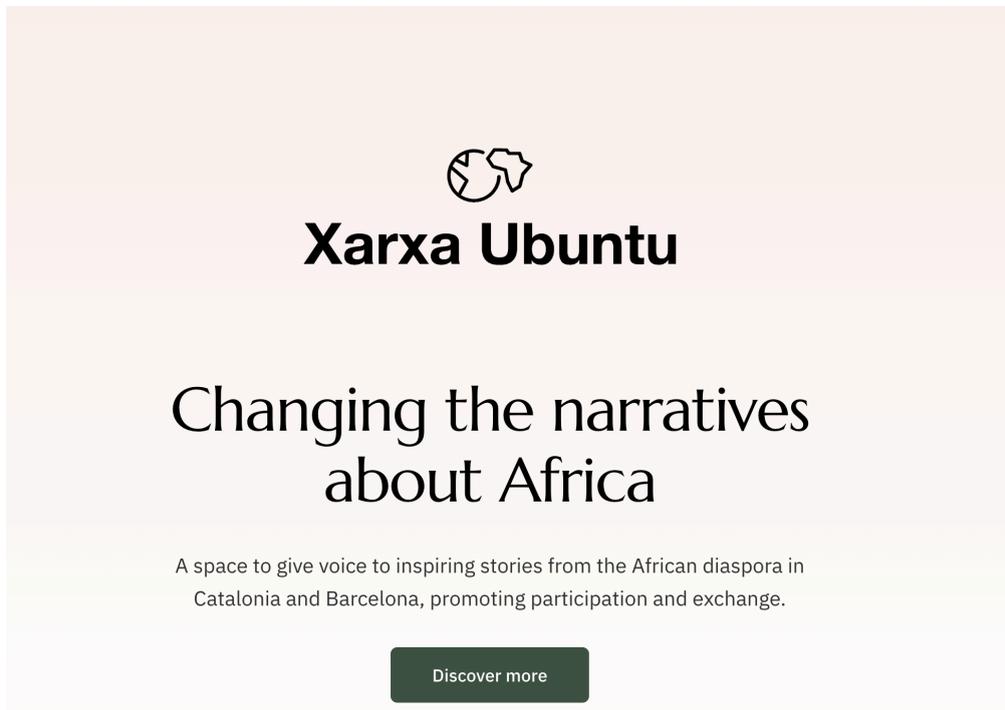
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## Appendices

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*Screenshot of the Xarxa Ubuntu website ([www.xarxaubuntu.org](http://www.xarxaubuntu.org)), the digital hub developed to connect communities, share resources, and promote the voices of African and Afro-descendant communities in Catalonia. The platform serves as a tool for visibility, engagement, and participation.*



*Images from the event “Veus Africanes per la Pau” (African Voices for Peace), held at the Parliament of Catalonia in January 2025 during the III Jornada de la Pau. The gathering brought together African and Afro-descendant voices to share experiences, challenges, and policy proposals on peace and inclusion. These photos capture a pivotal moment: diaspora representatives not only participating but actively shaping public policy by presenting their proposals directly to legislators.*

*[In this link](#), you can find a full report about the session and, [in this link](#), a video recording of the event.*



*Group photo from the event “L’odi no xuta” (Hate Doesn’t Kick), a football match and community gathering held in Barcelona to stand against racism and hate speech. The initiative brought together young people, activists, and community leaders to promote inclusion, respect, and coexistence through sport and shared values.*



*Participants at the event “Hate Doesn’t Kick” in Barcelona, shown before and during the football match. These images capture the project’s approach to peacebuilding: using sport to break down barriers, foster dialogue, and create a vibrant space of inclusion and coexistence.*

*More pics [here](#).*



*In this image, you see participants of the 'African Voices for Peace' event engaged in a collaborative working session at the ICIP headquarters. This gathering was a cornerstone of the initiative, designed to empower African and Afro-descendant community members to directly co-create proposals for Catalonia's future public peace policy. This photo illustrates a powerful process of collective reflection and ownership, where marginalised voices are not only heard but are also at the centre of building a more inclusive society.*

*[In this link](#), you can read more and see more pictures of the event.*



III JORNADA DE LA PAU  
DEL PARLAMENT DE CATALUNYA  
«PERSPECTIVES AFRICANES DE PAU:  
POLÍTIQUES I PRÀCTIQUES»

 Palau del Parlament

 31 de gener de 2025

 10.00 h

 Per a assistir a la jornada us hi heu d'inscriure per mitjà del formulari

 Podeu seguir l'acte pel Canal Parlament:  
[www.canalparlament.cat](http://www.canalparlament.cat)



*Invitation to the event "African Voices for Peace," held in January 2025 at the Parliament of Catalonia as part of the III Peace Conference. The gathering brought together African and Afro-descendant voices to share experiences and proposals for public policies on peace and coexistence in Catalonia.*



**Dia Internacional contra el Discurs d'Odi**  
**L'odi no xuta**  
**Futbol per la convivència**

**Dimecres 18 de juny de 2025**  
**A les 18.30h**  
**Camp Municipal Nou Sardenya**  
**Carrer de les Camèlies, 42B, Barcelona**

Organitza:

ICIP INSTITUT CATALÀ INTERNACIONAL PER LA PAU  
 club esportiu europa  
 Xarxa Ubuntu

En el Dia Internacional contra el Discurs d'Odi, posem en valor l'esport com a eina de cohesió social, respecte i resistència enfront el racisme i qualsevol forma de discriminació.

**Taula rodona** amb Raül Romeva, doctor en Ciències de l'Educació i l'Esport; Luca Gervasoni (Novact); Kristian Herbolzheimer (ICIP) i Ingrid Hinojosa i David Sow (SSB). Clourà la sessió Victòria Alsina, presidenta del districte de Gràcia.

**Partit amistós** entre Street Soccer Barcelona (SSB) i una selecció formada per entitats socials i el Club Esportiu Europa.

*Flyer of the event "L'odi no xuta" ("Hate Doesn't Kick"), a community football match held in Barcelona in June 2025 to raise awareness against racism and hate speech. The event promoted inclusion, respect, and peaceful coexistence through sport and collective action.*



**Veus africanes per la pau:**  
**propostes des de la diàspora per a la política pública de Catalunya**

**Dijous 19 de juny de 2025**  
**A les 17h**  
**Seu de l'ICIP**  
**Aragó 244-248, 6a planta, Barcelona**

Organitza: ICIP INSTITUT CATALÀ INTERNACIONAL PER LA PAU  
 Xarxa Ubuntu  
 En el marc de: FC FORUM CATALÀ PER LA PAU

Trobada amb l'objectiu de recollir aportacions concretes des de la diàspora africana per incorporar-les al procés participatiu del Fòrum Català per la Pau.

L'acte dona continuïtat a la III Jornada de la Pau del Parlament de Catalunya, celebrada el passat mes de gener, que va posar el focus en les veus africanes i afrodescendents com a agents actius de pau.

*Aforament limitat. Es prega confirmació d'assistència a través d'activitats@icip.cat*

*Flyer of the event "Veus Africanes per la Pau" (African Voices for Peace), held at the ICIP headquarters in June 2025. The event gathered African and Afro-descendant participants to co-create proposals for the future public policy on peace in Catalonia, as part of the Catalan Peace Forum process.*