



EU Aid Volunteers
We Care, We Act



MENTORING HANDBOOK





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INTRODUCTION

Mentor is a person who gives a younger or less experienced person help and advice over a period of time, especially at work or school¹.

In volunteering management, mentoring is shared equally between the sending and the hosting organisations. This Handbook is about mentoring in the hosting organisation, aiming to give the main guidelines about how to support a volunteer all along the project.

Hosting successfully a volunteer in the organisation is an equation of several elements, but the main role is played by two persons: “the mentor” and “the line manager”.

Throughout this “Mentoring Handbook” will be covered the main aspects of how to support a volunteer in the best way, from the welcoming to the final evaluation, to insure his/her integration, wellbeing, task assignment and the impact to the local community and his/her personal and professional development.

The Handbook covers different steps and aspects of a volunteering project cycle within the hosting country, including advice regarding the day-to-day life and conflict resolution.

Objectives of the Handbook

The aim of this Handbook is to provide the mentor and the line manager in the hosting organisation with knowledge and best practices in different steps of the project: volunteers’ welcoming, follow-up and evaluation through:

- Explanation on how to carry out the mentoring meetings
- Advice of behaviour to adapt or actions to take in case of conflict situation

To whom is it intended?

The Handbook is addressed to the mentor and the line manager in the hosting organisation.

How to use the Handbook

This Handbook has been conceived as a tool that the mentor and the line manager can rely on for an efficient mentoring whilst hosting volunteers.

The Handbook gives the mentor and the line manager a better understanding about:

- Their role and responsibilities
- The main steps to reflect about when hosting a volunteer.

In the following pages the mentor and the line manager can find information about:

- How to carry out ongoing evaluation and provide feedback

The handbook can be a useful tool on how to:

- React during challenging situations
- Tackle and react in case of conflict

¹Cambridge Dictionary, 18th May 2020, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/mentor>

01 MENTORING

- 1.1 The line manager
- 1.2 The mentor
- 1.3 What is not mentoring

Mentoring can change the whole perception of the project itself. An efficient mentoring can make the volunteer feel welcome, integrated, awaited, heard, understood, supported... The volunteer will have the best conditions to carry out his/her activities and be motivated to fully devote him/herself to the project.

Therefore, when planning to host a volunteer, the hosting organisation has to define a line manager and a mentor to monitor the volunteer all along his/her project.

- *Line manager: responsible of the project (legally, administratively), contact of the SO.*
- *Mentor: monitoring the daily tasks and projects. Referent for the local integration and projects.*





1.1 The line manager

The line manager is in charge of supervising the overall volunteering project, to ensure the quality of the activities and the results reached by the volunteer. Together with the mentor, the line manager is also in charge of monitoring the development of the skills and knowledge of the volunteer during the project, as well as the follow-up of the global well-being, the working and the living conditions of the volunteer.

The line manager has to hold at least one meeting with the volunteer at least one meeting at the beginning of the project, one at the mid-term and one at the end of the project to evaluate learning and achievement progress.

Before the arrival of the volunteer the line manager has to

- Identifies the needs
- Communicates with the sending organisation on the arrival conditions (date, special needs...)
- Selects a mentor for the volunteer according to the project he/she is going to work on

The key skills of the line manager should be: being a good listener, empathize, adaptability, being able to personalise the activities for the volunteer, patient, diplomat, available, have psychological ability...

THE LINE MANAGER IS

- A mediator between the mentor and the host family and the volunteer
- The contact person for the sending and/or coordinating organisation, for the volunteer, the mentor and other responsible branches (if applicable), and the contact person for the stakeholders
- In charge of administrative, pedagogical, financial and legislative issues related to the project
- Planning and managing the activities of the volunteer (together with the local stakeholders' delete responsible, if foreseen)
- Organising the on-arrival training in the hosting organisation.

KNOWS

- The sending and the hosting organisation
- The role of the volunteer within the organisation
- The strategies for conflict resolution
- Volunteer's expectations, motivation and competences
- Rights and expertise of the volunteers
- The rules of the hosting organisation
- The local stakeholders
- The cycle of the project and the expected results
- The accommodation.

CHECKS

- That the host family:
 - Has prepared a clean and lockable room for the volunteer
 - Explained to the volunteer how things work at home,
 - Provided a place for the volunteer to store food and his/her personal things
 - Inform you if they remark suspicious or uncomfortable behaviour of the volunteer
 - If the volunteer respects the common rules
 - Does not overcome the limits on carrying about the volunteer
 - If the hosting family does not overprotect the volunteer.
- That the project progresses
- That the volunteer achieves his/her objectives.

PROPOSES

To the volunteer to take some holidays and travel to "refresh their mind".

In case of disagree, **FINDS A COMMON** solution and "adds" the solution in the common rules list .

LINE MANAGER'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES





1.2 The mentor

The mentor is the first contact of the volunteer during his/her project in case of any question related to the project. Indeed, the mentor can build a strong relationship with the volunteer with a deep understanding across cultural differences. It can be a very challenging but also rewarding role to help the volunteer being integrated in his/her new life and to support his/her personal evolution through the implementation of his/her activities.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MENTOR AND VOLUNTEER

- Built on trust
- Supportive
- Open: encourage the volunteer to come and speak with you if there are some personal and professional difficulties.

NB: According to the size of the organisation and to the budget of the project, one person may have the double role: line manager and mentor. Although it is recommended to divide the roles when possible.

VOLUNTEERS' EXPECTATIONS

- To share his/her knowledge while gaining new skills and getting new experience
- To be given a period of adaptation
- To get concrete and achievable goals (especially during the first weeks)
- To work with the team and with the local community
- To have a concrete project
- To reach different goals with and for the local organisation and local community, as well as personal and professional goals
- To be heard,
- To receive regular feedback,
- To receive support in the activities implementation
- To have a support of the development of a personal project
- To feel valuable
- To be integrated

THE MENTOR

- Offers individual support
- Provides information and knowledge
- Supports and monitors the learning process of the volunteer
- Gives advice from own experience
- Encourages and supports with the local integration
- Sets concrete and achievable goals with the volunteer
- Is in contact with the volunteer before the departure
- Knows and understands the expectations of the volunteers
- Is in charge of supporting the volunteer in his/her everyday life and in his/her project activities
- Is available at any time all along the project in case of emergency or difficulty faced by the volunteer
- Assigns tasks related to the volunteer' skills and experience
- Guides the volunteer in his / her activities
- Insures decent and safe working conditions
- Creates a framework where the volunteer can apply his/her skills and experiences, using them as an effective response to the needs of the hosting organisation
- Provides feedback
- Evaluates and sets personal and professional objectives with the volunteer
- Provides support during challenging situations (demotivation...).

In addition to the daily support, the mentor should do specific weekly or monthly meetings with the volunteer to review all the volunteering project aspects (living and working conditions, activities carried out, integration, relationship, difficulties...).

KNOWS

- The activities that the volunteer carries out
- The cycle of the project and the expected results
- The field project and the beneficiaries
- The living and working conditions of the volunteer
- The aspirations, challenges and goals of the volunteer.



THE MENTOR'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES



1.3 What is not mentoring

Mentoring is NOT about parenthood or friendship, but it is a professional relationship based on co-work and communication, honesty and solutions' oriented.

The mentor is not...

- A parent for the volunteer
- A friend
- Although the mentor has to be available at any moment in case of emergency, the mentor is not at

- the volunteer's disposal 24/24
- A superman and cannot fulfil all expectations.

To avoid confusion, the mentor should set the rules and communicate with the volunteer from the beginning in terms of:

- Regularity of the meetings
- When the volunteer can contact the mentor and the line manager and for which reasons
- Mutual expectations (including the do and don't for the volunteer).

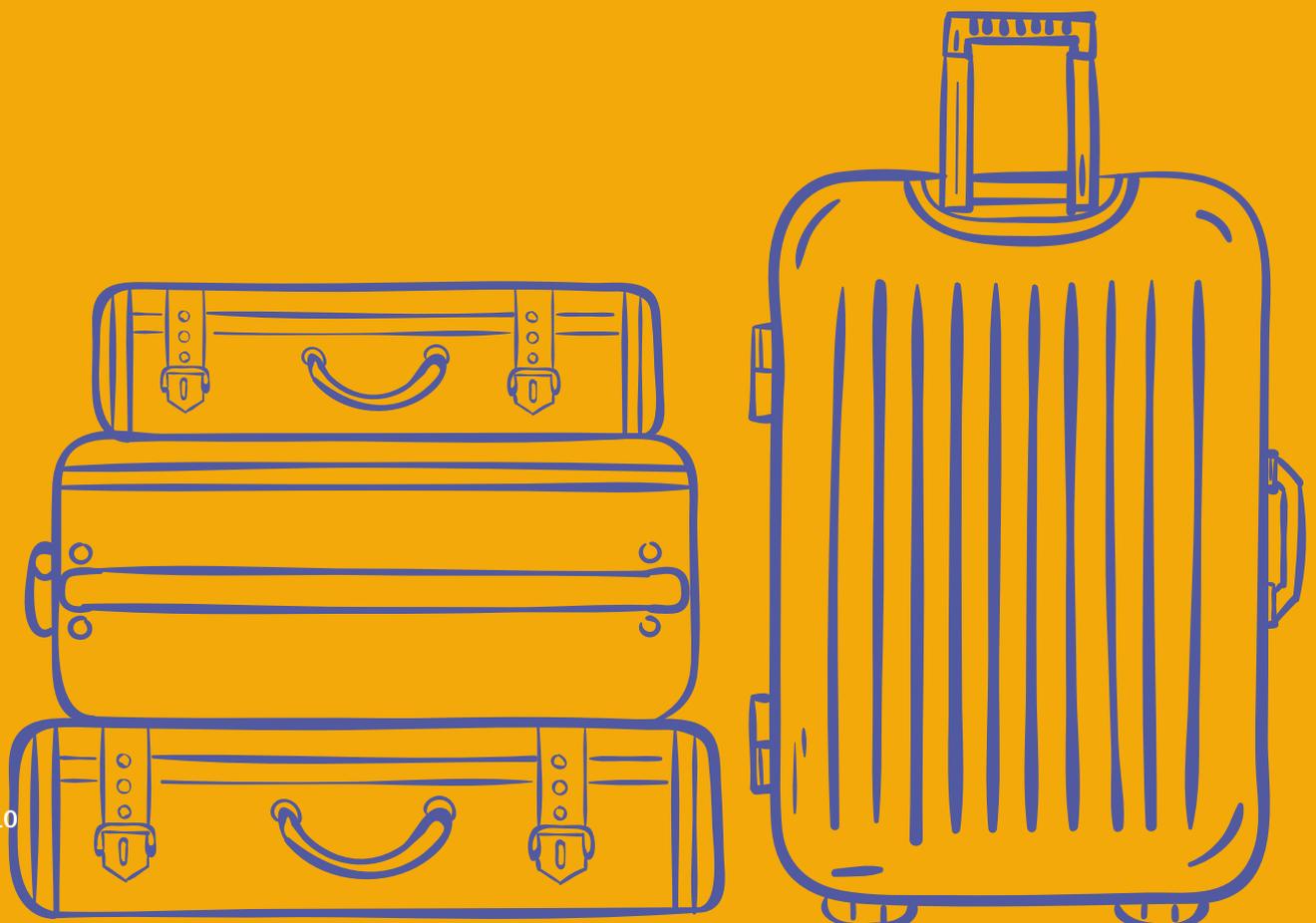
02

THE VOLUNTEER IN THE FIELD

2.1 Arrival of the volunteer

2.2 Welcome briefing

The hosting organisation should facilitate the integration of the participant within its new environment (country, staff, work, local community, etc.) and regularly ensure that the volunteer feels safe and secure in both his/her living and working environment.



2.1 Arrival of the volunteer

The success of a project and of a qualitative mentoring is also about anticipating. This is why a preparatory work should be done before the arrival of the volunteer.

It is really important to choose an arrival date where the mentor will be available to spend time with the volunteer.

To make the volunteer feeling welcome and awaited, the best to do is to meet the volunteer directly at his or her arrival (at the airport or train station).

Steps to follow

- Introduce the volunteer to the team, let him/her feel comfortable in his/her working place explain to him/her how everything works (schedules, materials, offices, etc.). Introduce to the volunteer the specific referent persons he/she can contact (in case of emergency, for working aspect, for daily life, etc.). It can be the same person or different ones, depending on the organisation's capacity and functioning.
- Don't forget to brief the staff about volunteer's arrival and her/his future role in the organization.
- Train the team about the communication and give some notion about cultural differences.
- Avoid creating a "volunteer team" and a "staff team" but make them working all together.

On arrival of the volunteer, schedule a meeting and set the way how everybody will work together and talk about:

- The need of the volunteer and expectations from him/her during the project
- The volunteer's expectations
- The volunteer's role
- Your role as mentor
- Regularity of the meetings
- Activity plan for at least the first 2 weeks*
- Learning and Development plan**.

Volunteer's point of view

- The learning goals help to anticipate the disappointment, or losing motivation;
- Concrete goals help to overcome the small problems of everyday life.



**Learning and Development Plan

All sending organisations have to develop the learning and development plan with the volunteer.

- Setting the learning outcomes that volunteers are expected to achieve
- Expected competences, learning needs

The hosting organization has to set up the objectives and expected output based on this plan. It is important to organise a formal face to face meeting and write down fixed plan.

NB! Important to retain about the on arrival step!

- Do not give too many information at the same time
- Give a Handbook that the volunteer can read including what was said about the organisation and volunteering management
- Be available for questions in connection with living arrangements within the first weeks
- Give a short "integration period" to the volunteer and inform him/her about it: Time for observing the project, activities, local communities and to think about how he/she will be involved.
- Organise a "welcome lunch" for his/her arrival
- Organise his/her workspace before his/her arrival
- Let the volunteer begin his/her project with small practical activities.

*Example Planning

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Lunch time							
Afternoon							

EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW

MY OBJECTIVES ARE

- What are my advantages and strengths?
- What are my fears and concerns regarding...?

EXPECTED COMPETENCIES

What kind of competences you would like to develop?

- Technical competencies in a specific field (construction, environment, health...)
- Management competencies (project implementation, fund raising, evaluation and monitoring, partnership relations...)
- Relational competencies (diplomacy, intercultural issues management, team working...)
- Personal competencies (autonomy, adaptability, flexibility...).

OTHERS

What kind of competences you could transfer to the local organization?

- Technical competencies in a specific field (construction, environment, health...)
- Management competencies (project implementation, fund raising, evaluation and monitoring, partnership relations...)
- Relational competencies (diplomacy, intercultural issues management, team working...)
- Personal competencies (autonomy, adaptability, flexibility...).

OTHERS

- What can this volunteering initiative bring to me? (List 3 items for each section).

IN TERMS OF CAREER

- Personally
- Socially / relationships
- How can I make use of this experience when I return?



2.2 Welcome briefing

The integration of the participant should start with a special welcome induction (on-arrival training) that will be a good preparation of the stay in the hosting country with two main objectives:

- To present “How to behave in the hosting organisation and hosting country”: hosting country’s habits and traditions, health and security, legislation of the country, necessary information about emergency contacts and addresses, general rules of the hosting organisation
- To know “How to carry out a successful volunteering project”: process and quality of the project (training, tasks, everyday life, etc.), roles, rights and duties, follow up and evaluation.

The welcome briefing must be done at the arrival of the volunteers in the field to introduce the team, the project, the partners... and to present the working and living conditions.

The introduction can be done over at least 3 days to present deeply the local environment and the project. This will help the participant to get a better orientation in everyday life and facilitate any upcoming challenges.

It is important to explain all the rules of the organisation to the volunteers as they do not know how the work is organised. Take a time to explain all the rules and behaviour expected as well as the role of each staff member.

The volunteer should be informed who is the next person in line he/she can contact when the mentor or/and the line manager is not available (Communication tree). If there are specific rules to know about the region and implemented activities areas, take the time to explain them step by step to the volunteer.

At the end of the Welcome briefing the volunteer must have a good understanding of:

- The local context, including aspects of intercultural learning and appropriate behaviour
- The question about the health, safety and security risks & measures, evacuation plan
- The main activities about the deployment
- The operational context, and expectations on outputs and results from the volunteers’ task assignment
- The rules, internal functioning and the beneficiaries of your organisations.

All along the project, the monitoring of the volunteer has to be ensured by the mentor (for the everyday life and activities) and a line manager who will globally supervise the project (performance, activities...) through first, mid-term and final interviews.



03

FOLLOW-UP OF THE VOLUNTEER

- 3.1 Prepare the monthly follow-up meeting
- 3.2 4 steps to a successful follow up meeting
- 3.3 Mi-term review
- 3.4 Final evaluation

All along the project, the monitoring of the volunteer has to be ensured by the mentor (for the everyday life and activities) and a line manager who will globally supervise the project (performance, activities...) through first, mid-term and final interviews.





3.1 Prepare the monthly follow-up meeting

A well-prepared meeting is more likely to generate good results. Indeed, the more preparation the mentor puts in the meeting, the better the volunteer will feel welcomed, expected, needed, integrated, involved, and understood.



The monthly meeting should be scheduled in advance, so both the volunteer and the mentor could prepare it properly.

The monthly follow-up is not the same thing as a usual task-related meeting to evaluate only a specific activity progress. Its aim is to evaluate the overall volunteering project and to help the volunteer feeling supported in the implementation and the evolution of the activities, and personally supported.

At the beginning of the meeting:

- Make a short summary of the meeting in order to let the volunteer understand the goal of a such follow-up meeting (Agenda).
- Set some rules and boundaries
- Adopt an attitude of interest, openness and empathy with the volunteer
- Encourage the volunteer to be spontaneous,
- Keep the control of the meeting and remain transparent and open to communication.

- 1 Schedule a date
- 2 Find nice place
- 3 Prepare the interview form
- 4 Meet face to face
- 5 Take notes
- 6 Interview / Exchanges
- 7 Next steps and closure

3.2 4 steps to a successful follow-up meeting

First of all, it is very important that the mentor shows interest and shows active listening. Let the volunteer finish and then reply by making comments or share new information, provide feedback regarding what the volunteer just said. He/she can then ask some questions and give guidance.

The meeting can follow these 4 steps:

The mentor has to make at least one official face-to-face mentoring meeting per month with the volunteer:

- Fix the date, time and place for the follow-up meeting
- Organize a face-to-face meeting, and do not limit the communication only to emails/other communication channels
- Create a safe and empowering environment for the volunteer.
- Prepare an interview frame or use the form in the annex
- Prepare the notebook to take notes.



1 Active listening (hear and comprehend)

- Be attentive to avoid misunderstandings – avoid being distractive
- Focus on the volunteer and be curious about what the volunteers says
- Try not to interrupt the volunteer – take notes
- Avoid judgements and try to understand the point of view of the volunteer;
- Show interest by adapting a positive and open attitude, including the body language.

2 Give a Feedback

- Giving and receiving feedback is important in the relationship with the volunteer
- Volunteer needs to be encouraged
- Say if something needs improvement

3 Ask questions

- It is important that the mentor shows curiosity about the work (activities, work with the colleagues) and integration and wellbeing in the Host country (avoiding too personal questions)
- Review the objectives of the volunteer
- Ask questions if something is not clear

4 Give guidance

- Share your knowledge and experience
- Help to find the solution in case of any kind of problems appeared during the project

NB! It is important

- Do not forget to inform the volunteer and sending organisation if you judge there is a security-related issue. In this particular case, the sending organisation can also bring support. In this regard it is very important to keep a regular communication and work together to come up with the best solutions
- Avoid doing something else during the meeting with the volunteer - they get frustrated.

VOLUNTEERS' EXPECTATIONS

- Need to be listened and to have a feedback about the activities done
- See that the role of the volunteer is important and their contribution is valuable to the organization
- Be encouraged to development their personal project (help to encourage participants to take initiatives);
- Be able to enhance this experience and competences acquired in the hosting organisation so they can capitalise during their job search;
- Importance of a follow-up regarding their own personal and professional project. It should ease their inclusion on the labour market.



ACTIVITIES

- Which activities have you carried out?
- Did you meet any difficulties to achieve your tasks? (Lack of competencies, difficulties of understanding with the local team, lack of financial support, relational issues with the local community)
- Does the accomplishment of your tasks brought any value added to the local community?

OBJECTIVES AND FEARS

- How do you evaluate the evolution of your initial objectives and expectations at the end of the deployment?
- Do you take any initiatives? If yes, explain.

RELATIONS

- How do you evaluate your relation with the local team? With the beneficiary audience?

INTEGRATION TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- How do you assess your adaptation to the local environment?
- Do you feel integrated in the local community?
- Did you feel like understanding the situation and the local/regional/national culture(s)?
- Have you experienced social or intercultural issues? If yes, detail and tell how you overcame them.

EVERYDAY LIFE / PRACTICAL ASPECTS

- Concerning everyday life conditions did you had a compliance with your initial expectations?
 - With the country minimum standards of life?
 - With your safety feeling?

LEARNING ACQUIRED/IMPROVED COMPETENCIES

- Since the beginning of your mission, have you been able to use personal competencies?
- Have you used competencies you had before the mission?
 - Technical competencies in a specific field (construction, environment, health...)
 - Management competencies (project implementation, fund raising, evaluation and monitoring, partnership relations...)
 - Personal competencies (autonomy, adaptability, flexibility...)
- Have you transferred some competencies to the local team? If yes, which?

3.3 Mid-term review

Mid-term review is a key step for both the volunteer and the project itself.

It is carried out by the line manager. During the mid-term evaluation meeting the line manager can make a fair appreciation of what has been done compared to what has been planned. Both, the volunteer and the organization can learn from the experience of the implementation of the activities, but also from some challenges. It is also a good moment to review the goals and expectations set during the first meeting

It is the time for a general assessment and, if needed, to take decisions or redirect the activities to make the best of it by the end of the project.

This meeting can be held by the line manager and the mentor with the volunteer, and it has several objectives:

- To discuss about which activities have been done and the objectives for the following weeks / months
- To check learning progresses and achievements of the participant (learning plan)
- To help the participant to have a self-reflection about his/her achievements, his/her personal goals his/her integration into the local community and on his/her personal development
- To help the participant in case of any kind of problems appeared during the project
- To give space to personal initiatives and creativity
- To discuss about perspectives for the second half of the project.

VOLUNTEERS' EXPECTATIONS

- Need to be heard and to receive a feedback about the activities done
- See that the role of the volunteer is important and that you need the volunteer in the organization
- See that the role of the volunteer is important and that you need the volunteer in your organization
- Development of a personal project (help to encourage participants to take initiatives)
- Recognition of their skills and experience acquired during the project that can capitalise during their job search
- Make a deep review of all the activities carried out by the volunteer so far, the progress, the difficulties, lessons learnt during the 1st half of the project
- Make a deep focus on the perspectives (activities, projects, roles, learnings, objectives) for the 2nd half of the project.



EXAMPLE OF FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

ACTIVITIES

- Which activities have you carried out?
Are the tasks you are carried out complying with your initial objectives?
- Did you meet any difficulties to achieve your tasks? (Lack of competencies, difficulties of understanding with the local team, lack of financial support, relational issues with the local community)
- How do you assess your understanding of your intervention context at the middle of the mission?
- Does the accomplishment of your tasks brought any added value to the local association?

OBJECTIVES AND FEARS

- How do you evaluate the evolution of your initial objectives and expectations at the middle of the mission?
- Do you have any responsibilities? If yes, explain
- Do you take any initiatives? If yes, explain

RELATIONSHIPS

- How do you evaluate your relation with the local team? And with the beneficiary audience?
- Do the mission and the activities you are completing make you part of the team? Does it bring you to cooperate with local associations, local communities?

INTEGRATION TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- How do you assess your adaptation to the local environment?
- Do you feel integrated in the local community?
- Did you feel like understanding the situation and the local/regional/national culture(s) (problematic issues, cultural specificities)?
- Have you experienced social or intercultural issues? If yes, detail and tell how you overcame them. For serious incidents, the volunteer will have to complete an incident report.

EVERYDAY LIFE / PRACTICAL ASPECTS

Concerning everyday life conditions did you had a compliance with your initial expectations, with the country minimum standards of life and with your safety feeling?



LEARNING ACQUIRED/IMPROVED COMPETENCIES

Since the beginning of your mission, have you been able to use personal skills such as autonomy, adaptability..?

Have you used skills you had before the mission?

- Technical competencies in a specific field (construction, environment, health...)
- Management competencies (project implementation, fund raising, evaluation and monitoring, partnership relations...)

Have you transferred some skills to the local team?

If yes, which?

NB! It is important

- The line manager should schedule the meeting in advance with the volunteer
- Prepare the meeting
- Use the evaluation frame and take notes
- Pay attention to the discussion and avoid misunderstandings.
- Be curious about the activities volunteer carries on
- Take a time to confirm that you do really understand what the volunteers had said;
- Clarify key points of the deployment in midway through
- Give a Feedback: giving and receiving feedback is important in the relation with the volunteer.
- Advise as much as possible: Volunteers are waiting for advices
- Help to find the solution in case of any kind of problems appeared during the project
- Discuss about how is going between the mentor and the volunteer
- Plan the next half of the project.

3.4 Final evaluation

After a regular follow-up, it is time for an assessment of the volunteer's project. This final evaluation is very important for both, the volunteer and the hosting organisation to evaluate the project and the volunteer's results, as well as its impact.

Indeed, this meeting represents also for the line manager a starting point of consideration for hosting a new volunteer and which are the needs, tasks and profile required for the missions to come.

At the end of the mobility project, the volunteer needs to have an evaluation meeting with his/her mentor and the line manager. This meeting has the following objectives:

- To discuss about the activities, outputs and results
- To discuss about the impact of the project on the volunteer, hosting organisation and beneficiaries
- To have a feedback about their global integration into the local community and everyday conditions
- To measure the learning progress and achievements of the participant (learning plan),
- To discuss if the learning gaps identified at the beginning of the project have been filled during the project thank to the new experience
- To help the participant to have a self-reflection about his/her achievements
- To prepare the participant to return home, to plan his/her future projects
- To plan new needs assessment.

To understand if the project has been successful/reached the objectives, the line manager and the mentor should compare the expectations and objectives before departure with the achievements of the volunteer during the volunteering deployment. The idea of making an evaluation of competences and skills before the departure will also allow to identify gaps in skills and create a plan for enhancing the weak areas during mobility.

VOLUNTEERS' EXPECTATIONS

- Need to be listen and to receive a feedback from both the line manager and the mentor about the activities carried out during the whole duration of the project
- See that his/her role was valuable and that he/she could bring his/her contribution to the organisation and to the local community
- To be able to capitalize the new professional and personal experience and new acquired competences during their job search.



NB! It is important

- Prepare the meeting
- Use the evaluation frame and take notes
- Take a time with the volunteer to reflect about their own experience and talk about all the aspects of the project
- The aim is also to compare the objectives before departure: have they been reached (this is why you should have them nearby you, during the meeting)
- Let the volunteer to reflect on the competences acquired during the mobility.
- Give a feedback and show the impact he/She/had on the local community
- Propose a recommendation letter as a support if the volunteer is planning to apply for a job after the project.

TEMPLATE FINAL EVALUATION MEETING ACTIVITIES

- Which activities have you carried out? Are the tasks you are carried out complying with your initial objectives?
- Did you meet any difficulties to achieve your tasks? (Lack of competencies, difficulties of understanding with the local team, lack of financial support, relational issues with the local community)
- How do you assess your understanding of your intervention context at the end of the mission?
- Does the accomplishment of your tasks brought any added value to the local association?

OBJECTIVES AND FEARS

- How do you evaluate the evolution of your initial objectives and expectations at the end of the mission?
- Did you have any responsibilities? If yes, explain
- Did you take any initiatives? If yes, explain

RELATIONS

- How do you evaluate your relationship with the local team? With the beneficiary audience?
- Did the mission and activities you have completed make you part of a team? Brought you to cooperate with local associations, local communities?

INTEGRATION TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- How do you assess your adaptation to the local environment?
- Did you feel integrated in the local community?
- Did you feel like understanding the situation and the local/regional/national culture(s) (problematic issues, cultural specificities)?

LEARNING ACQUIRED/IMPROVED COMPETENCIES

- Since the beginning of your mission, have you been able to use personal competencies?
- Have you used competencies you had before the mission?
 - Technical competencies in a specific field (construction, environment, health...)
 - Management competencies (project implementation, fund raising, evaluation and monitoring, partnership relations...)
 - Personal competencies (autonomy, adaptability, flexibility...)
- Have you transferred some competencies to the local team? If yes, which?
 - Technical competencies in a specific field (construction, environment, health...)
 - Management competencies (project implementation, fund raising, evaluation and monitoring, partnership relations...)
 - Relational competencies (diplomacy, intercultural issues management, team working...)
 - Personal competencies (autonomy, adaptability, flexibility...)
 - Others
- Your own achievement/pride concerning your involvement in the mission? Explain

RETURN HOME/FUTURE PROJECTS

- How do you prepare your return?
- What are your future plan after your return?
- How to do plan to valorise your experience and to share with the others (blog, social media etc)?
- What can be the opportunities for you to stay involved relating to humanitarian projects?

04

POTENTIAL CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

- 4.1 In everyday life
- 4.2 Activities achievement
- 4.3 Unstructured situation
- 4.4 Cultural differences
- 4.5 Conflict resolution

Being mentor can be a wonderful experience, but it can also be challenging related to different aspects of volunteering management.



4.1 In everyday life

Some difficulties cannot be predicted, but other can be anticipated. It is the duty of the hosting organisations to insure the health and safety of the volunteer, as well as his/her wellbeing throughout the project. Do not forget that what is normal for the local organisations, is not always normal for the foreigners – different mind-sets, expectations, cultures, time approach.

Problems that may arise during a volunteering project can be connected with:



Emotions

The longing and missing for family and friends, a sense of loneliness, disappointment, shyness, cultural chock on arrival...

WHAT CAN BE PROPOSED TO THE VOLUNTEER?

- Make sport
- Take a volunteer for café or lunch
- Take some holidays
- Have regular meetings to ask how is going
- Introduce the volunteer to other people, local or international volunteers to create a social life
- Inform the volunteer about cultural events, places that he/she could visit
- Make sure the volunteer can be in touch with the family and friends
- Provide books so the volunteer can read more about the country and the cultural aspects to facilitate the integration.



Financial issues

The volunteers may have difficulties in managing their budget or financial difficulties.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO AVOID DIFFICULTIES? INFORM THE VOLUNTEER ABOUT:

- The living costs in the country
- Where to buy cheap food (to cook at home) and ultimate products
- The second hand shop system, where to buy used things
- Specific discounts for young people, sale period,
- How to bargain in the market
- Money change places, to avoid rips
- The use of the common transport.

Health

Depression, eating disorder (too much, not enough, bad food), stress, lack of sleep, accidents.



WHAT CAN BE PROPOSED TO THE VOLUNTEER?

- Visit a doctor/psychologist
- Give some days off for the rest/holidays
- Take a volunteer for a café or organise an activity out, eventually with other colleagues or volunteers.

New environment

Integration difficulties within the local community, problems or lack of interest in making new contacts, poor infrastructure and lack of public transportation...



WHAT CAN BE PROPOSED TO THE VOLUNTEER?

- Have a talk with the volunteer and ask how you could help
- Visit a doctor
- Take a volunteer for café
- Introduce the volunteer to all colleagues and other volunteers, to the local community
- Organise teambuilding activities with team and volunteers
- Propose places to visit the surroundings
- Show to the volunteers how things work in the office and at home.

Issues with the host family

Adaptation to the way of life of the hosting family, different habits, authorities, community living, rules, relationships difficulties, lack of comprehension...

The relationship with the other volunteers

Misunderstanding, different conception of work, overlapping duties and/or responsibilities, difference of treatments...



WHAT CAN BE DONE TO AVOID DIFFICULTIES?

- Organise a meeting with each volunteer and with all the volunteers and ask what is not going well. It is important to hear each part in order to take a fair decision
- Don't be a judge, be solution proposal oriented. Discuss together how this kind of situation could be avoided in the future
- Be neutral and try not to aggravate the situation
- Set the rules from the beginning
- Create team building activities and encourage them to work together and support each other, while having their own project
- In case of violence/harassment between the volunteer, the deployments need to be terminated.

4.2 Activities achievement

Difficulties and misunderstandings can also occur during the planning or the implementation of the activities by the volunteer. These difficulties and misunderstandings have to be taken seriously as it can affect the smooth functioning of the project.



Activities and tasks assignments

The volunteer doesn't understand the tasks or there is a lack of planning activities. Very fast, the volunteer can have a lack of interest and motivation to work.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Define the tasks to everybody
- Have regular meetings to evaluate progress
- Set up deadlines and inform what it is expected from him/her in terms of results
- Keep yourself available to answer questions and provide support
- Adapt the tasks to the volunteers' profile
- Discuss with the volunteer potential changes in the tasks and the objectives
- Avoid asking the volunteer to do ambition projects, they are not employees
- Give place for personal project and encourage his/her creativity
- Keep the volunteer motivated and provide personal and professional recognition
- If a volunteer struggles with a task implementation, put them working with other volunteers or other staff
- In case of lack of activities, re-evaluate the need and discuss with the other staff what kind of activities can be done
- Facilitate the communication in the field by providing the translation by local volunteer or interpreter.



Lack of communication

Misunderstandings can often come from a lack of communication between the mentor and the volunteer.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Organise regular meetings to discuss with the volunteer
- Plan the meetings in advance
- Give regular feedback on the work that volunteer understand she/he is in right direction
- Answer regularly to the volunteer's email and messages
- Avoid that the volunteer cannot advance in the work
- Facilitate the communication between the volunteer and the other staff/stakeholders/community
- Organise team building to facilitate the communication between you and the volunteers, with the other staff, between the volunteers
- In case of travel, holiday, medical leave, inform the volunteer to whom can address his/her questions/ask for support during the mentor's absence.

Different workstyle

There are different ways to work. Some volunteers need more explanations and guidance to carry out the activities. Some volunteers like to work independently and do not need step by step guidance to complete the task.



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Set the rules
- Allocate an observation period to understand how each other works before working together...
- Provide space for creativity and innovation that the volunteer could bring
- Take a time to discuss about the problem itself.

Personal conflict

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Set the rules from the beginning
- Do not to mix the problem with the person
- If there is a conflict between the mentor and the volunteer, the mentor or the volunteer should discuss with the line manager who should have a role of intermediary/a third party and a neutral point of view
- Find a balance in the personal and professional relationship to avoid misunderstanding.



Need to feel "important" and "valuable"

Some volunteers have the feeling that the other members of the team in the hosting organisation do not understand why they are there and what they are doing. Volunteers can easily feel demotivated as their deployment seems to have no importance and no meaning for the host organisation and local communities.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Prepare the team before the arrival – Inform about the role of the volunteer and ask to be flexible and supportive, raise awareness about cultural differences
- Set the rules
- Encourage team work with different members of the team when possible.

4.3 Unstructured situation

Difficulties may also result from unstructured situations. It is important to keep in mind that volunteers are not at in their usual environment nor they grew up in this culture and country. It is not always easy to understand all the situations.

Therefore, the conflict may result from



Unknown situations

It is not easy to react nor adapt behaviour in an unknown situation. It may often happen to the volunteer. This can lead to some misunderstandings.

Example: The organization was waiting for significant funding from the donor to be able to launch the first purchases of equipment and start activities. However, when the volunteers arrive, the association informs them that the funding has not yet arrived and that the deadline is uncertain. The tutor calls the volunteer to propose a solution: go work for another association for 1 month, giving English classes to children.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Propose different solutions
- Inform the sending organisation and the volunteer before and try to find joint solutions
- Propose the volunteer to carry out other activities linked to their field of experience.



Lack of interest for the activities from the beneficiaries' situation

It may happen during a volunteering project that the local community is not interested in the activities that the volunteer proposes.

Example: The volunteers began their mission with an immersion in the field: they participate in educational activities with children and children's teachers in schools. However, in one of the schools, the public is not receptive: some children stop coming after a few days' even if the activity is considered as compulsory by the school.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Encourage the volunteer to be creative
- Facilitate the work before – discuss with the teachers, school director, etc.

Limited human resources situation

Some volunteers may have important expectations and a strong will to implement activities. Unfortunately, they can be confronted to a lack of human resources.



Example: in the association there is a lack of funding, at this moment there are only 2 employees who are recruited. The volunteer takes his/her work very seriously, invests a lot of time and energy to find funders and spends 10 hours a day in the office. The tutor, the association director often goes on a business trip and the volunteer is left alone, has no one to answer her /his questions...

WHAT TO DO?

- Keep in regular contact and answer to the email so the volunteer can keep working and not be blocked
- Recruit local volunteers when possible.

NB: for security reasons the volunteer is not allowed to work alone, the hosting organisation need to find a solution.

Unusual situation

A lack of framework or communication can lead to a wide interpretation range for the volunteer in unusual situations. In this case, a lack of guidance can lead to difficulties.



Example: A volunteer took the initiative to meet with a local organization that does awareness-raising and education work with children, in order to collect data on ongoing projects in the region. In order to save time, he did not go through the usual hierarchical scheme, which would have cost them several days. The tutor summoned her about this initiative.

WHAT TO DO?

- Set the rules and demand to the volunteer to not take decisions in the name of the organisation
- Ask the volunteers to inform the mentor and/or line manager before taking the initiative
- Inform about the hierarchy - communication tree.

4.4 Cultural differences

People's cultural background influences them in the way they react in different situations.

The own culture becomes a self-reference criterion: since no culture is identical. That leads to judging all other cultures as insufficient when it comes to the behaviour at the workplace. It is important to always keep in mind the differences of interpretation that may come from cultural differences and lead to various misunderstandings.



What does “yes” mean?

Very often volunteers are difficulty to understand question about YES and NO. They not understand that “yes” doesn’t always mean agreement.

If you use hesitation sentence (Let’s see / maybe you’re right / We will think about it / Maybe you’re right) instead of NO, the volunteer do not understand that. Volunteer assimilate “YES” with the truth. So, you should tell the truth even if it is unpleasant and not common in your culture

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Be transparent, sincere and do not be afraid of saying “NO” when something is not possible. It will avoid future misunderstandings, conflicts and that the volunteers wait for something that will never come...
- The volunteers will know to adapt and could propose solution in case of a “NO” answer, but they need to know it to avoid
- Provide the volunteers with books and information on the local country culture and difference with their country



The arguments are not the aggressions

Volunteers have been grown up integrating that they have the right to argue/reply back with a sustained answer to find the best solution, especially when they are very passionate about their work and expect that their project makes a difference in the Hosting organisation and community.

They are used and encouraged to ask lots of questions for better understanding. So, you should not take the arguments like an aggression. The “argument situation” should not be avoided and understand like a discussion and not like a fight.

HOW TO AVOID?

- Be open to discussion
- Don’t take things personal
- Be transparent and have a fluid discussion
- If the discussion becomes “tense” take a break and discuss the subject when you both calmed down
- Remind the volunteer that this is a “mentor-volunteer” relationship.
- Be open to find joint solution – midway, find a compromise
- Explain calmly when something is not possible.

The perception of the time and propose for “tomorrow”

The volunteer and the HO may have different perception about the “time” and how (fast) the decision making takes place.

Lot of volunteers grow up in very structured environment and are used to function with the objective and dates (deadlines). They do not understand what is behind “tomorrow” or “soon”, “it will arrive”. If they are not clear answers, they get anxious.



HOW TO AVOID?

- Explain the real situation and inform them when you are depending on somebody else to take a decision (donor, employer/line manager, a specific delivery for material, schools holidays, etc)
- Do not be superman
- When is possible put the volunteer directly in touch with the persons in charge
- When is possible, try to “open” doors to facilitate/ speed the process; Sometimes everything depends on an “email”
- “False” promises will bring demotivation and frustration in the end.

4.5 Conflict resolution

As mentor it is very important to have a deep knowledge on mediation and problem solving. The mentor and the line manager need to know how to react to a potential problem in order to resolve it as soon as possible.

An issue comes from different unresolved elements may be:

Disagreements	Non-respect of the rules	Lack of resources or support
Misunderstandings	Conflict Issues Tense situation	Depression / Tiredness
Cultural differences	Lack of transparency	Lack of communication



Therefore, to solve an issue, it is important to understand the all chain that led to it. all elements of the chain. Each element has to be taken separately to understand at what moment the situation started to change

The first step is then to identify

1. Identify

It is important to identify all the steps of the process that led to the issue.

It is seldom the case that there is only one issue. You should therefore explore all the scale of the problem in order to play down the drama. Be careful, the problems that you identified may differ from the ones the volunteer identified. Don't judge, and try to understand those differences.

2. Express

After taking the time to identify properly all the elements of the chain. It is of a paramount importance to take a time for discussion. You can give space to the volunteer to express himself or herself.

It is important to draw the list of observations during the identifying process. Carefully choose your words and stick to the facts. This is also the moment to open up to emotions.

3. Imagine

Taking into account all that have been said, imagine all the possible solutions and invite the volunteer to do the same. Be creative! The aim is to find a way to fill all needs on both sides! Find a common ground.

Here are some adding tips that may be helpful in creating strategies within organisations in case of possible problems

Do not avoid the conflict situation

- Identify the conflictual situation and try to anticipate them
- Organise meetings to come out with a solution to the conflict situation
- Prefer face to face individual meetings, and eventually have a neutral part when is possible to calm down if the situation gets tense
- Propose the plan "step by step" out from the conflict situation
- Be solution oriented
- Put yourself in the place of the volunteer
- Ask the volunteer to put him/herself in your place and ask what he/she would do
- Address directly the person concerned, talking about the problem to intermediaries will raise the tensions.

How to carry out the “conflict solution” meeting?

- Before trying to find a solution, find together the source of the conflict
- Adapt the communication and note how this could be avoided
- Listen carefully the volunteers without interrupting and keep calm
- Avoid all type of aggressivity (posture, verbal)
- When taking the word, ask the volunteer not interrupting in return
- Do not take the arguments personally
- Each person should assume his/her mistakes/ responsibility
- Do not mix the problems with the person. Make a clear distinction between the problem and the person
- Try to keep the relationship based on trust and therefore avoid mistrust
- Explain the situation with facts and tell the truth. The volunteer can understand the situation if you explain
- Stick to the facts
- Agree and disagree – try to arrange the next steps by and show what you want to achieve. Find a common agreement, compromise
- Find a solution that takes into account all aspects of the problem.

In case the mentor is not able to resolve the problem he/ she should ask a neutral third party to intervene. This third party can be useful for mediation and assistance. Sending organisation can take on this role if necessary. Note that you can understand without agreeing.

VOLUNTEERS' EXPECTATIONS

- Need to be listened
- Confront and discuss current issues
- Adjust the work and activities
- The perception of time is not the same in every country
- Work together and not each one on his/her own.



Contact the sending organisation if the volunteer encounters this difficulty

- Health problems, including depression
- Integration difficulties
- Conflict with Host family: to discuss if there is a lot of dispute between the host family and the volunteer, the best way is to change the host family
- Conflict between volunteers/with the mentor: When the situation becomes tight, contact also their sending organisation
- Financial issues: Inform and discuss the sending organisation and try to find joint solutions
- Important Incidents – violence, harassment
- Major changes in the project
- Lack of activity
- The volunteer is not motivated, comes late to work, not respectful behaviour, etc
- Any other problem that may have direct impact on the health and safety of the volunteer.



05

ANNEXES

- Learning and development plan
- Interview frame
- Mi-term interview frame
- Final evaluation interview frame

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