

The Mentoring Guide and Toolkit

By practitioners for practitioners



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IMPRINT

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INTRODUCTION

Have you been asked to work as a **mentor** in international voluntary services? What were your first thoughts when you received the request? Did you ask yourself, for instance: Why are mentors needed in international voluntary services? What are they expected to achieve? What kind of a role does a mentor play? Where can I find **insights** into such assignments?

Perhaps these considerations eventually inspired you to pick up this Toolkit. We have discussed the topic of **Mentoring in the Host Country** from various perspectives in an international **working group**. Some of the members of the working group are employees of sending organizations from Germany; others represent the staff of the hosting organizations, others are mentors and some are former volunteers.

As a group we share the mutual experience that the responsibilities and concrete roles of mentors are frequently unclear within international voluntary services. Moreover, **practical tools** that support the work of mentors are hard to come by. Consequently, we have designed this **Mentoring Guide and Toolkit** as a collection of tools that are closely based on the practical requirements. The aim is to provide a reference that will be helpful for the pedagogic work to be done with international volunteers. It neither claims to be complete, nor does it intend to impress upon readers that a good mentor has to fulfill all of the described requirements. The statements made herein instead have been to provide recommendations, ideas and good practice examples **proposed by practitioners for practitioners**.

The Mentoring Guide and Toolkit has been divided into seven sections. They may either be read in chronological order, or the reader can select certain portions of the Toolkit that are of particular interest to him/her:

Chapter 1 addresses the fundamental issues: What does the term mentor mean and which roles do mentors assume? Why do we call this process the mentoring process? Which competences/qualifications should mentors bring to the table? The chapter gives an overview about all the basics in the mentoring process.

Chapters 2 through 7 comprise the actual Mentoring Toolkit. They depict the following topics in chronological sequence: Initial contacts, orientation phase, regular interaction, crisis management, global learning and evaluation. For each of these sub-chapters we have gathered various practical experiences and have expanded upon them by adding ideas, tips and worthwhile knowledge. At the end of each chapter, you will find concrete tools for some aspects, e.g. conversation guidelines, case studies, evaluation forms or samples for practical use.





An entire range of the tools and explanations provided can also be found on our project website: www.ivs-quality-toolkit.org. The team of authors is looking forward to welcoming you to the site as a visitor and encourages you to comment on the individual tools, ideas and depictions on the site. Of course this is also a great platform to add your own tools!

We hope that you will enjoy reading this booklet and that you will be able to use much of the **Mentoring Guide and Toolkit** advice in your own practical work!

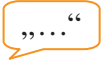


LEGEND

To make the publication more reader friendly, we have added this short legend to the manual describing the icons you will find throughout:

	<p>Whenever you see this icon, you are reading a statement referring to a survey, where we have posed direct questions, such as <i>What are the characteristics of a successful mentor? Which mentoring system are you using in your work?</i> The answers provided are usually literal quotes.</p>
	<p>We use this icon whenever we want to place a special emphasis on a statement as it refers to a central and crucial aspect.</p>
	<p>This icon indicates that you are required to come up with your own answers. Take a break from reading and take notes – write down a question, a thought or an idea.</p>
	<p>Whenever you see this icon, you have at your fingertips practical examples and tools for the implementation of concrete assignments. You find these practical examples always at the end of each chapter.</p>

CHAPTER 1 – WHAT DOES THE TERM MENTOR MEAN? WHY IS THE PROCESS CALLED A MENTORING PROCESS?



**Glory Tzchange, official mentor at
CBCHB Cameroon**

“A good mentor, in one sentence, is a person, who is able to feel for the volunteers. A mentor should be able to imagine how a volunteer in another country feels and to offer orientation for him/her. That means that a mentor should be somebody who tells the volunteers what is expected of them. It may be somebody who can really provide guidance to volunteers. A mentor should also be able to expose the volunteers to the different aspects

of the culture in that country. It’s important that the mentor is somebody who can answer the volunteer’s questions and that he is somebody who is always available. Finally a mentor should be able to make life interesting so that is not just work, work, and work for the volunteers.....”

What does the term mentor mean?

The term mentor is of Greek origin and initially referred to a person in Homer’s epic story The Odyssey. In Homer’s story, he is a friend of the hero – Odysseus – and the protector of the former’s son, Telemachos¹. Inspired by this mythical mentor, we now use the term based on our own interpretation to describe a more senior and benevolent **advisor or companion** of a young individual.

According to the guidelines of *weltwärts*² each hosting organization should „provide one personal mentor in charge of

¹ During the ten-year post Trojan War odyssey of Odysseus, Goddess Athene did from time to time slip into the role of Mentor to keep an eye on Telemachos and to give him advice (source: wikipedia; Mentor)

² *weltwärts* is a program sponsored by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Since 2008, this program supports International Voluntary Services in Development Cooperation in Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and South/Central America.

each volunteer who has experience in the interaction with volunteers and who is in a position to provide comprehensive support to the volunteers.“ This definition also provides more concise insights into the following responsibilities: Airport pick-up, orientation/on-the-job training at the hosting organization and professional pedagogic support. However, what does the term **professional and pedagogic support** mean concretely? The related responsibilities remain ambiguous for many mentors.

Professional and pedagogic rendering of support to volunteers – i.e. mentoring in the host country – can include the following responsibilities:

- Initiating contact with volunteers, hosting and sending organizations prior to the arrival of the volunteer,
- Provision of support to volunteers during the initial orientation process, e.g. through the offering of orientation days or an orientation seminar,
- Being available as a contact for volunteers whenever problems arise,
- Provision of consistent accompaniment to the volunteers while they are serving abroad, conducting of conversations and availability for reflection on experiences,
- Supporting the global learning process of volunteers,
- Involvement in farewell events for volunteers

A wide array of responsibilities – many people: The mentoring process

Based on the experiences of the members of the working group it is indeed almost impossible for a single person to handle all of these responsibilities. Instead, due to time, personal and financial constraints, it is frequently necessary for **multiple individuals** to be involved in the pedagogic accompaniment of a single volunteer, who share the tasks as they arise.

Such teams may for instance be composed of the following individuals:

- A national coordinator in charge of several volunteers in an assignment country. The national coordinator is frequently not part of the hosting project, but responsible for all volunteers assigned to the country. However, as a result, he or she may not always be available personally, and may in some cases live hundreds of kilometers from where the volunteers are stationed. In this case there are often other contact persons located in the immediate vicinity of the volunteers (so-called *regional mentors*)
- A male or female mentor or responsible contact person outside of the hosting project who is immediately available and can be quickly reached by the volunteers
- A co-worker/colleague at the assignment location
- An individual in charge at the hosting organization
- The host family with whom the volunteer is residing
- The remaining community in which the volunteers live (e.g. neighbors, friends)

Depending on the local, organizational and staff conditions, the hosting and sending organizations have implemented different mentoring and support concepts. This is why it would not make much sense to define the roles and responsibilities of a **mentor** here and now. In lieu of this, the different interpretations of mentoring can be consolidated into one when the process is referred to as the **mentoring process**. It begins before the volunteer arrives at the hosting country, continues with the orientation and on-the-job training phase and the actual stay in the host country and ends with the returning phase upon return to the sending country.

Ideally, the mentoring process should comprise all of the above mentioned responsibilities, regardless of whether and how many different players are involved in the process and how they share their responsibilities.

Consequently, if you find more detailed descriptions of the individual mentoring responsibilities in this Toolkit, you may want to reflect who would be most suited to handle these tasks: A co-worker, a supra-regional coordinator, the host family, a contact within the assigning organization, etc.



To make this presentation more reader friendly, we will continue to use the term *mentor* throughout this publication, but will do so in the understanding that the mentoring process involves multiple people and that they all share the role of the mentor. The term *mentor* makes reference primarily to the provision of **pedagogic support in the host country**.





Questions pertaining to your own mentoring process:

1. Which individuals are involved in providing support to volunteers in your organization?
.....
2. Who could be added to the mentoring team in order to provide optimum mentoring?
.....

The objectives of the mentoring process

The mentoring process in an international voluntary service aims at various objectives:

- First and foremost, the provision of personal support does make it possible for the volunteer to feel **safe in his/her environment**, so that he or she can do his/her best to bring competences, qualifications and commitment to the project position and learn the language, familiarize himself/herself with the culture and politics of the host country and develop an understanding of all of the aforementioned.
- This approach also allows the fostering of development policy related or **the global learning** of volunteers during their Voluntary Service. It makes it possible to motivate volunteers to advocate for the development policy objectives even after they have completed their volunteer assignments.



However, it is not the objective of a mentoring process to have solutions for all impending responsibilities and problems at the ready or to resolve challenges on behalf of the volunteer! In fact, for the progress to be made by the volunteer, it is much more important that the volunteer gets actively and directly involved as far as the challenges that life in a new country poses are concerned. He or she will have to live through a variety of crisis scenarios to achieve this. Young volunteers do, however, need **support**, hints or simply a dependable contact in such situations,

so that they can take action themselves; discover new opportunities to take action and to give alternative approaches a try.

Being available as a source of support to volunteers who are staying in a foreign country sometimes means **additional work**, responsibilities and is always subject to ever changing challenges. Nevertheless, the mentoring process should not be understood merely as additional work. The experiences of the working group members have shown that the encounters with international volunteers can lead to the development of many special experiences, **learning opportunities** and in some cases years of deep friendship.



William Stanley, Project coordinator Integrated Rural Development of people Section in India

“For me it is crucial that the mentor is involved with the volunteers in building of trust, so that the volunteers have confident to share information in times of problems. From a good mentor I expect that he/she can be freely accessed at any time by the volunteers. Finally the mentor should not have a paternalistic attitude but rather be a kind of friend and have an equal relationship with the volunteer. It’s not only the volunteer who learns in the whole process, it’s also the mentor who learns from the volunteer.”



Questions pertaining to your own mentoring process:



3. What can you as a mentor bring to the table? Which focal points would you like to emphasize as a mentor?

.....

4. What would you like to learn from your work with volunteers and what would you like to gain?

.....

Mentoring process competences and qualifications

Given that several individuals are usually involved in the mentoring process, it is not a prerequisite for any individual to have all of the required mentoring qualifications. Instead, throughout the mentoring process, it is helpful to consider who has which competences and how they can be **bundled successfully** and used for maximum benefit.



The members of the working group have agreed upon the following qualifications for mentors:

- The ability **to communicate** with the volunteers, the assigning organization and the hosting organization (have a common language of communication)
- **Sensitivity with regard to cultural and gender issues** from a cultural perspective (e.g. in Africa: the mentor should be of the same sex as the volunteer because of different cultural perceptions in the local community regarding relationships between man and woman); awareness/knowledge of cultural differences and the ability to explain them to the volunteers in everyday life
- The ability to have **regular communication** with the volunteer, the hosting organization (especially if you are not part of the hosting organization) and the sending organization (in terms of language, time, writing skills etc.)
- The ability to listen to the volunteer, **show empathy** (“to walk in the shoes of the volunteer”) and have the ability to understand the generational gap
- Be conversant with the rules and regulations of the hosting organization
- **Be within “reach”** (that means, a mentor should be a person the volunteer can easily reach to within a reasonable time directly and /or per phone)



**Anne Kerber, Protestant
Voluntary Service for young
people**

“From my point of view a mentor should be a person that is available and can act as a neutral contact person in the event of problems and crises. A good mentor should have the ability to understand the volunteer’s perspective. It’s not important that a mentor speaks the German language. However he/she should be aware of cultural differences and he/she should be able to “translate” or explain them to the volunteers. Another thing that is very important to me is that the mentor is respected by all the other actors involved which mean the sending and the hosting organisation, the volunteer and the project. Finally a mentor is not expected to do everything for the volunteer: it is more about advice and guidance – the mentor does not need to be an “entertainer” for the volunteer.”



Questions pertaining to your own mentoring process:



5. Which mentor has which of these qualifications? Where are the strengths and weaknesses of each person involved in the process?

.....

6. Which competence is not represented in our mentoring process so far? How could it be established in the mentoring team?

.....

General requirements for a successful mentoring process

Effective pedagogic support is not only determined by the mentor’s qualifications, but also by the general conditions. In order to make a mentoring process successful, the clarification of the following aspects is recommended:

Understanding of the mentoring role and contractual provisions

- There is a need for a contract between the mentor and the hosting organization/ sending organization

- The mentor plays a key role in the international voluntary service
- Persons involved in mentoring should be appointed by the hosting organization in agreement with the sending organization

Personality of persons involved in mentoring

- The person must have time available for the volunteers (when he/she needs him or her)
- The mentor should appreciate the volunteers and he/she should be somebody who wants to be around volunteers
- The mentor should want to support volunteers BUT not in the sense of doing everything for the volunteers. It's more about guiding, assisting or giving ideas, and it can be expected that the volunteer takes the initiative himself/herself.

Training and seminar

- Vocational Training is necessary (e.g. technical know-how, knowledge about the concept of international voluntary services, process, tools)
- Workshops with focus on exchange and consulting are necessary
- The workshops should be offered in the form of collaborative teamwork by the sending organization, hosting organization and mentor.

Finances – financial remuneration for mentoring work

- Minimum requirement: Full coverage of all expenses that arise during the mentoring-process
- Mentor should have a budget to spend with the volunteers
- The mentor should receive an additional small allowance/wage

1

The location of the mentor: Advantages and disadvantages of having mentors inside and outside the project side

In the following you can find a short discussion round with mentors and volunteers.



Samuel (moderator): Thank you all for joining this round. My first question goes to the volunteers. Can you tell us about your mentors? Who were they? What kind of experiences did you made?

Christine (volunteer): My mentor was called Janet. She was a staff member of a church community outside of the project. We, the volunteers, paid her a visit each week or met with her. She welcomed us with open arms and showed genuine interest in our needs. She'd also spent an extended period of time abroad herself. As a result, she was able to put herself in our shoes in many respects. She was someone you could turn to no matter what was on your mind. She really did understand most of our problems with great compassion.

Alex (volunteer): When I arrived in my host country, Jacob, our supra-regional coordinator, was there to pick me up at the airport. He also accompanied me on my long trip to the project side. Over the course of the year, I had multiple contacts with him – most of them, however, via telephone because he lived about 200 km from the project away. On the project side, I had Michael as a daily contact. He was the assistant of the organization's director and was able to provide effective support to me as far as my work was concerned. We also embarked on a joint excursion once and sometimes we'd go for a drink in the evenings. We got along really well, but I was unfortunately not in a position to confide in him about my problems with the director's concept of what my

stay entailed because I did have misgivings about criticizing his boss when I talked to him.

Samuel (moderator): Okay, thanks. Now let's talk about your work as mentors. How did you become mentors in the first place? What did your responsibilities consist of?

Michael (mentor): Our organization has been hosting volunteers for many years. The first time we were officially required to have a mentor available was in conjunction with the *weltwärts* funding program. Given that I'd actually spent a few months abroad myself and because I'd always had a great relationship with the volunteers we hosted, I assumed responsibility for this assignment. I was familiar with the emotions one goes through as a foreigner in a different country because of my own experiences, which included quite a few funny as well as some grave misunderstandings. This is why I find it easy to get in contact with volunteers and I can easily level with them. Sometimes that seems to be all they need – a sense that someone understands them. I also show our volunteers what our everyday routines on the job look like and I develop ideas for the implementation of their own projects with them. Regrettably I do not always have a whole lot of time for our volunteers because I have my own job duties and I also complete all the forms and billing statements that have to be exchanged with the sending organization. Last, but not least, I also have my own family to look after...

Olivia (mentor): As a result of my personal relationships, I had already established a very close interaction with Susanne, who works with the sending organization in Germany. When the new volunteer program "weltwärts" was introduced in Germany, Susanne asked me if I wanted to be a mentor for the volunteers she was sending to our organization. I was happy to agree to do it. However, once the volunteers were here, it was not always an easy feat for me. I did sometimes wonder what my concrete responsibilities entailed and how I could give our volunteers the best possible support without encroaching on their personal sphere too much. In my position as their mentor I always wanted

to give the volunteers space and the opportunity to let go of their emotions about work and everyday concerns. I wanted them to be able to talk openly about their experiences. I am convinced that this provides a safety valve for many volunteers. This is why it is certainly an advantage that I am not a direct employee of the hosting organization. On the other hand, this also means that I sometimes am not as well informed and not in the loop when it comes to important decisions that are being made.

Samuel (moderator): Well, it appears as if there are indeed different types of mentors and none of the current solutions is absolutely perfect. Of course your responsibilities vary – however, the needs of the volunteers probably differ a lot, too, don't they?

Michael (mentor): I agree. Not every volunteer is partial to my humor and I sometimes find it difficult to address all of the wishes of our volunteers. It has been my experience that it is indeed advantageous if I as a mentor am not also the direct supervisor of the volunteer. As a result, I am not confronted with a conflict of interest if a volunteer criticizes our work or our staff.



The discussion round underscored different ways of approaching the mentoring process. On the one hand **a mentor can be an individual who is not part of the hosting organization**, i.e. he is not part of the organization's staff. In this case, the mentor can keep a bit of a distance from the organization and is in a favorable position to act as a mediator if problems between the volunteer and the hosting organization arise. However since these mentors are often in charge for a group of volunteers it is also quite common for this type of mentor not to live in the immediate vicinity of the volunteer, which makes it necessary to maintain contact with greater effort. On the other hand, **a mentor may also be someone who works for a hosting organization/project**. In this case, the mentor is very familiar with the hosting organization and



usually has the capability of rendering good advice to volunteers as far as their professional work is concerned. However, because of his own responsibilities at work, a staff member of the hosting organization may not have enough leeway to attend to the emotional concerns of the volunteers and their possible criticism of the organization. The advantages and disadvantages of each constellation are reiterated in the overview below. If you are aware of these advantages and disadvantages in the mentoring process, you may be better prepared to influence them.



Location of the mentor	Mentor is a staff member of the hosting project	Mentor is someone from outside of the hosting project
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good accessibility is a given because the mentor is in contact with the volunteers on a daily basis - Trust and acceptance by the hosting organization is a given - The mentor has the opportunity to address problems at work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The mentor may sense a certain distance from all other stakeholders involved: the hosting project, the sending organization and the volunteer - > as a result he/she makes a good mediator in the event of problems - The mentor's responsibility may be more focused on rendering general support to the volunteer, not only work-related support. Leisure time activities and global learning play a more significant role.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In some cases, the volunteer will not be able to discuss all problems arising during everyday work assignments with complete forthrightness as this can lead to role-related conflicts within the organization - The mentor may actually be too focused on the volunteer's work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The mentor is not an everyday contact and may possibly live very far from the volunteer's assignment location - The mentor may not enjoy 100 % acceptance with the hosting organization and there may also be problems with the flow of information. As an outsider, the mentor can also be perceived as a controlling function by the hosting project.

The concepts we have introduced in this Chapter aim at defining the term mentoring in more detail to make it more tangible. We have explained why it is more appropriate to talk about a mentoring process than the role of individual mentors. We've described the goals, expectations, competencies and general conditions that are affiliated with this mentoring process. Now let's talk about the concrete responsibilities that are part of the mentoring process.

The responsibilities of mentors: How can a mentor provide assistance?

An international voluntary service actually begins long before the volunteer leaves his/her home country and it also does not end as soon as the volunteer returns home from the host country. It makes sense to keep an eye on the **entire time frame** that is considered the mentoring process and to inquire about situations in which volunteers need targeted external support.

Based on the time line of a typical volunteer assignment, the mentoring responsibilities can be divided into six phases ranging from the first contact established to the analysis of the volunteer year:



The **first contact phase** comprises e.g. the organization of accommodation, the establishment of contact with the hosting organization (provided the mentor is not a staff member of the hosting project) and the establishment of contact with future volunteers.

The **first orientation phase** includes the introduction of the volunteer to the host country, the customs in the everyday interaction with locals, the infrastructural situations, etc (communicated for instance in an orientation seminar). The volunteer should furthermore receive support and assistance with the integration into the host family, the initial meeting with the

hosting organization and in the event that he/she should want to participate in a language course or specific training programs.

The **regular contact** phase includes contacts and assistance rendered to volunteers throughout the entire duration of their international voluntary service. A blend of formal meetings and information encounters, such as walks, invitations to joint meals, excursions, etc. is recommended. Communications should take place at regular intervals. The effective sharing of information with the sending organization as well as the hosting organization are indispensable tools.

Crisis and emergency management is also a crucial element of the support services to be made available to volunteers. While crises are usually psychological in nature and can be handled in conversations and through reflection, effective emergency management is contingent upon first and foremost the fast forwarding of relevant information to the respective contacts.

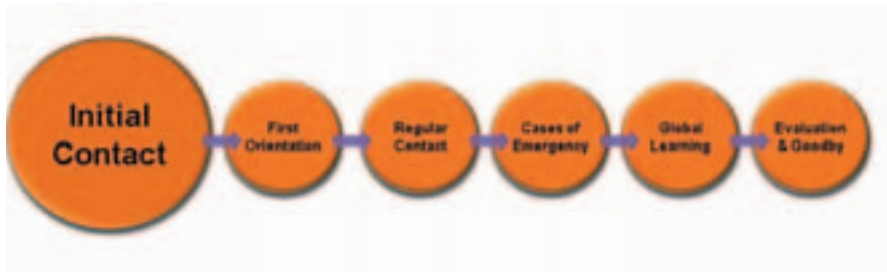
Global learning is one of the responses to the globalization process that affects (almost) everyone in the world today. The purpose of the concept of global learning is to enable people to understand global interdependencies more deeply and to participate in the creation of a global society through their own actions. The fostering of global learning is one of the key objectives of International Voluntary Services in Development Cooperation. Working in tandem, mentors and volunteers can embark on the path to their improved understanding of global relations.

The **final evaluation** of an international voluntary service shortly before it ends is an excellent tool for the parties involved to jointly analyze its success and to conclude the time spent in the host country. During such a reflective phase, it is also possible to jointly arrive at agreements on what should be changed as far as the next Voluntary Service is concerned.

The individual phases will be explained in detail in the following chapters. Besides a brief introduction of the purpose and objective of the respective scope of responsibility, the focus of the Toolkit modules will be on **practical application**. The modules have been designed as practical work tools that will allow everyone involved to identify who can assume which responsibilities throughout the mentoring process and how the tasks can be successfully handled in the long term. The tools are based on the experiences, recommendations and joint ideas of the working group. The members of the working group have developed specific templates, conversation guidelines or detailed reports on practical experiences for some of the ideas and proposals. These tools can be found at the end of each respective chapter.



CHAPTER 2: INITIAL CONTACT



An international voluntary service usually begins **long before the volunteer departs from home**. Three to twelve months prior to departure, the volunteer has obtained information with one of several sending organizations about the focus of their work, objectives and hosting projects. Further the volunteer wrote applications and participated in selection procedures. Once all of these hurdles have been taken, the actual process of preparation begins. Visa, insurance and inoculation related issues have to be taken care of, questions about the concrete work assignment or culture and language of the host country become imminent. International volunteers experience this **phase as one of excitement** about what's ahead and they are eager to learn more. At the same time they find themselves **confronted with insecurity**. The sending organization is not always in a position to assist in such situations because it is not familiar with the situation on location. Consequently, it is very important for volunteers to have a dedicated **local contact** even before they depart. Such a contact can assist with the search for accommodations, answer questions about the project side, the culture of the host country or appropriate clothing to bring. Ultimately, many volunteers benefit from the sense of security they get from knowing that someone is waiting for them at the other end of the globe – someone who will even pick them up at the airport in the unknown destination once they arrive.

How can a mentor assist a volunteer in such a situation? What can and has to be clarified prior to the arrival of the volunteer so

that the volunteer can quickly assimilate and feel more confident in the new home country?

Based on the experience of the international working group members, the following issues should be taken into account prior to the arrival of the volunteers:

- 1) Arrange accommodations for the volunteer
- 2) First contact with the hosting organization
- 3) First contact with the volunteer



1) Arrange accommodations for the volunteer

Finding suitable accommodations before the volunteer arrives is always very important! It will help the volunteer feel **safer** and **assimilate** to the new situation and surroundings **more readily**.

If the volunteer will stay in a city other than his/her final destination for the first few days, accommodations (e.g. in a hotel) will have to be booked in advance. This will be especially important, if volunteers arrive in larger groups.

For the orientation seminar and language course, a nearby venue will also have to be found.

A hosting family, a rentable flat or a hosting organization could provide accommodation in the hosting city. The stay at a hosting family should be confirmed at least one month before the arrival of the volunteer. Clarify also the conditions of living for the volunteer at the hosting family (e.g. possibility of inviting friends to the home, expected tasks to help in the house etc.). It might be important to re-confirm the arrangements a few days prior to the arrival of the volunteer.

If an accommodation is to be provided in a flat or house, it can be a good idea to make available three alternative options to the volunteer to choose from. During the volunteer's first few days in the hosting city the mentor and the volunteer can inspect the options together and discuss advantages and disadvantages.

NOTE: The type of accommodations always depend on the standards of the respective organization.

2) First contact with the hosting organization

It is prudent to contact the hosting organization(s) before the volunteer arrives and talk about tasks, working hours and a contact person.



If the hosting organization is one the mentor is not familiar with at all, it is a good idea to make an appointment for a short visit and ask for a brief presentation of the project and workplace, as well as the people working there.

At that time, the contacts there should also be given a briefing on the sending organization and specific program information like with the “weltwärts” program, if they are not already familiar with the information.

Moreover, it is a good idea to **discuss the organization’s plans for the first week of the volunteer’s service**, the tasks he/she may be assigned to facilitate the integration into the organization, and the place where he/she could do this work.

However, it might be also good to give the volunteer some leeway and his/her own space at the beginning of the service so that he/she will not be overwhelmed.



The contact with the hosting organization before each arrival of a volunteer is important, because there may be changes in the responsibilities related to the project. We also saw examples in our own experiences where a change of staff members led to changes for the volunteers’ work, especially if the contact person is replaced.

3) **First contact with the volunteer**

A good practice would be to contact the volunteers **one month before their arrival** at the hosting country. The **e-mail or the telephone call** could be done by a mentor who knows the city and project the volunteer will stay at.

Your email or call could clarify your and the volunteer’s **basic questions**. The volunteer for example would like to know your full name and your function. You can brief him/her on your plans on his/her first days at the hosting city and provide useful information about his/her new “temporary home” and the project. On the other hand you might want to know for example his/her level of education and experience.

The first contact is also an opportunity to clarify the date and time of arrival at the airport in the hosting country as well as common Visa practices for foreign citizens in the hosting country. Furthermore you can **exchange important telephone numbers**, e.g. of the hosting family and the project directors.



To facilitate the writing of this e-mail we have prepared a template to be enclosed with the e-mail. Only the specific details still have to be completed. You will find this *Tool 1: e-mail form* at the end of this chapter. If you prefer writing personal e-mails, don't hesitate! Our form is provided only as an optional helpful tool. The key is to provide the information listed in this section; the form can be chosen at your own discretion.



4) Picking the volunteer(s) from the airport

You might be inclined to think that picking someone up at the airport is not something that requires a lot of explanation. However, in our experience, this has actually proven to be an area where lots of complications and misunderstandings can arise. Airports are sometimes huge places, where people are always in a rush. Also, the fact that time zones are sometimes crossed can lead to confusion. The same goes for first and last names. Some male German names may sound like those of a girl in the host country and vice versa. To facilitate this process, we have designed a **short list** of things to be aware of when picking up volunteers at the airport:

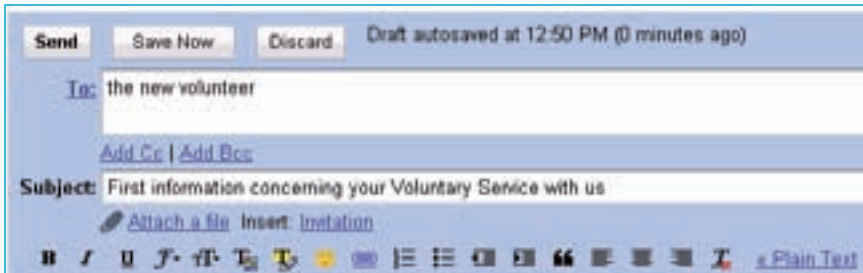
- 1) Consider and Check the electronic ticket one week prior to the arrival of the volunteers to be sure about the arrival date
- 2) Note the time differences and note the appropriate time of arrival according to your local situation (country)
- 3) Get in contact with the volunteers to know their names and how they want to be recognized. Check their passports to determine their gender.
- 4) Enable the volunteers to find you as well by giving your identity (name, photo, etc) to the volunteers and arrange a well defined meeting point (e.g. at the luggage area or the customs clearance – this varies from country to country). For quick identification, a “welcome sign” with the name of the volunteer can be created.
- 5) Let the volunteer know in advance how the customs handling is done and if she is expected to pay any money at the baggage claim area.
- 6) Ask for the number of luggage they have in order to determine the vehicle size for the “pick-up service”. Tell the volunteer in advance how many hours the journey from the airport to the residence will take and how often you will stop on the way, e.g. to have a short meeting with a project partner.





Tool 1: E-MAIL TEMPLATE - INITIAL INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS

2



Dear (name of the volunteer),

My name is ... and I am responsible for ... during your stay in ...
 By sending you this e-mail, I would like to provide you with some basic information about your first days in...
 After your arrival at (name of the airport), ...(name of the person, e.g. member of organization, coordinator etc.) will pick you up and wait for you at the exit door with a sign identifying your hosting organization.

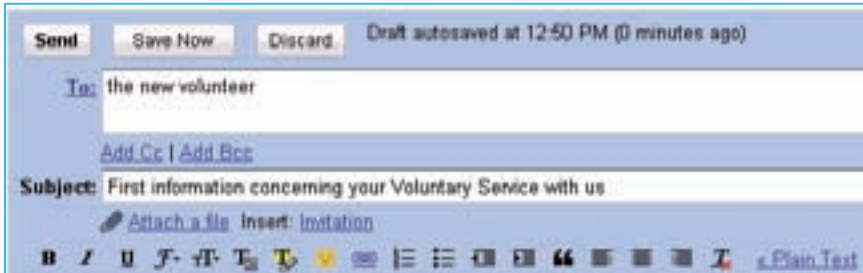
According to the information I already received, your flight will arrive on (date and time of arrival). Is this information still correct? **Note:** Provide information about the visa process of your country and about what the volunteer has to take into consideration.

For the first few days you will stay in ... (name of the city and the hotel). The program will begin with an orientation seminar. It will last ...days. In the timetable below I will give you some initial insights of what you will do during these days

Date /Time	Time frame	Activity	venue	Name of facilitator
		e.g. Orientation seminar		
		Language Course		
		City walk		
		Etc.		



2



After the orientation days you will be shuttled to your host family/host organization/you and I will look for appropriate accommodations. Below please find the information about and contact address of your host family:

Name:

Address:

Phone number /E-mail:

Number of children and names:

Age of children:

Occupation:

Below please find some pertinent information regarding your hosting organization:

Name:

Activities:

Director:

Working hours:

Contact person with contact details:

Finally, I would like to give you some brief information about the city where you will be staying:

Name:

Number of inhabitants:

Climate:

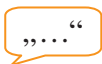
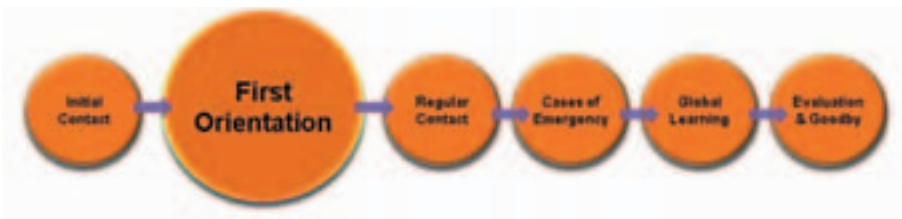
Sights and landscape

Cost of living

You will have regular contact with ... (name of and contact details (e-mail, phone of the contact person) during your stay in our country. Please feel free to call or write him/me at any time.

I am looking forward to welcoming you to... and wish you safe travels! Sincerely....

CHAPTER 3: FIRST ORIENTATION



Angela Staravoytova former mentor at Heidelberg Zentrum / Ukraine

“What I expect from a good mentor is commitment and being there when a volunteer needs help. This commitment is especially important on the first stages of a Voluntary Service, so when the volunteer comes to the project or to a foreign country. It means walking along the volunteer’s side on the first stages. Later it’s a constant checking how the volunteer is doing and being ready to interfere and even being a mediator between host organisation, sending organization and volunteer – if it’s needed.”

Upon the volunteers’ arrival in the host country, a **new** and **exciting** chapter in life begins for them. A wealth of information, strange scents, unknown sounds and a new language begin to make an impression on the volunteers. They are also surrounded by total strangers – and the conduct, patterns, greeting methods as well as the attention that white volunteers frequently experience in many other parts of the world every day may seem overwhelming to them. Much of what they are exposed to is completely new and they are asking themselves questions such as: What do they expect me to achieve? What can I bring to the table in my hosting project? How can I shop in the local market place and deal over prices? How do I converse with my neighbors? What kind of clothing should I wear and what are the special rules I have to pay attention to when it comes to the interactions between men and women?

3

Although these volunteers are adults and not children, being thrust into a new culture may cause **insecurities at first**, given that so many things are unknown. The rules and familiar habits acquired in the home country may not work in the new context, so that they have to go through a **process of re-orientation**. In this situation it can be crucial to provide support to the volunteers as they go through this orientation phase. Once again, the objective is not to shop for the volunteer or to protect them from new encounters. The goal is to provide as much relevant information for their new life as possible, so that the volunteer will soon be more familiar with the entire unknown. The orientation phase spans different life and work areas of the volunteer, including:

- 1) Host country introduction seminar
- 2) Introduction to the host family or accommodations assigned
- 3) Introduction to the host organisation and work place
- 4) Basic training on the job
- 5) Specific language starter course

1. Host country introduction seminar (general introduction)

An orientation seminar offered at the beginning of the volunteer assignment is an excellent opportunity for clarification of a vast number of questions about the host country in a small group and in a compressed format. It is a great place to **share experiences**. If the sending organization is assigning only one or a few volunteers to the host country, it may be practical to offer this seminar in cooperation with other sending or hosting organizations. This gives the organizations an opportunity to split up responsibilities and the volunteers a platform to meet other volunteers in the region. It is best to schedule an orientation seminar for the first few days of the voluntary assignment. The

practice has shown that duration of 2-4 days is best. In addition to the volunteers, the official mentor should also attend. On a temporary basis, other contacts from the host organization should also be present. As far as the seminar content is concerned, it should provide initial basic information on the host country, its culture, history, customs, dietary habits, shopping patterns, rules of conduct and ways to spend time off. The volunteers should also receive emergency and health management information. Another good topic for such a seminar could be the definition of the volunteer role and the expectations others may have of the volunteers. For further specific and practical information on such an orientation seminar, please refer to the end of the chapter where you can find *Tool 2: Example of an Introductory Seminar*.



2. Introduction to the host family or accommodations assigned

In addition to the general information on the host country, volunteers also have to receive information at their accommodations as far as important issues are concerned. Hence, it is best to accompany the volunteer the first time he/she goes to his/her accommodations and to **introduce him/her to the host family and/or neighbors**. In addition, the volunteer should receive information on the following:

- Clarify living conditions: for example where to get water, eating, cleaning material, dresses, room.
- Rules and regulations of the house e.g. curfew, if any; where to put what, important times, visits of friends/family, listening to music, smoking in the house,
- Security issues e.g. locking the doors and windows



3. Introduction to the host organization and work place

A proper introduction of the volunteer to the host organization is another critically important component during the volunteer's orientation phase. At the beginning, the volunteer should get a good and comprehensive overview over the host organization, the employees and their scopes of responsibility. In addition, the volunteer should receive information on the following issues:

- Information about the organizational hierarchy and tasks and the volunteer's position in the hierarchy
- Rules and regulations of the organization (if possible in writing)
- Introduction/discussion to job description and job position and discussion of possibilities for regular revisions
- Phone list of support staff members
- Informal get-together event with all staff members if possible e.g. dinner, tea



A practical example of the introduction to the various work assignments of a host project can be found at the end of this chapter in tool 3: *Case-Study Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Board*.

4. Basic training on the job if necessary

Some assignments may require volunteering to possess certain qualifications. To determine whether special training is required, it may be helpful to investigate the following further: Is it possible to acquire these qualifications in a specific training program? Is it possible for the volunteer to do some kind of training with the host organization or any other non-profit to learn the most essential basics? Is it possible for the volunteer to get information regarding the qualifications during the preparatory time at home so that the volunteer can obtain the knowledge prior to his/her departure or can complete a pertinent internship?

5. Specific language starter course if necessary

Most assignment locations will confront the volunteer with the need to understand and speak a foreign language. While young people in Germany usually learn English, French or Spanish up to a certain level in school, an option to adequately learn more exotic languages such as Hindi, Suaheli, Bosnian or Phon prior to leaving the home country usually is not available. If linguistic skills are of importance for the volunteer's everyday work, it makes sense to register the volunteer for a language class. Many sending organizations have a small financial budget for such measures. A language course may be taken at a language school or from a personal tutor. In most cases, it is recommended to attend intensive immersion course lasting 2-4 weeks at the beginning of the assignment.



TOOL 2: INTRODUCTION SEMINAR - EXAMPLE

Framework

Duration:

- At least 2 or 3 days within the first 4 weeks after arrival

Participants:

- Volunteers
- Volunteer program coordinator/mentor
- Other contact persons from the hosting organization (only some of the time)
- If possible / necessary: facilitator/s

Ideas and recommendations:

- If possible: collaboration with other sending organizations for a collective introduction seminar

Goals of the seminar:

- Getting to know each other (volunteers and contact persons for the volunteers within the hosting organization)
- Support the orientation process of the volunteers
- Learning about the culture, history, civilization and development issues of the host country
- Introduction/ orientation to the life and the reality of the host country/hosting region as well as the life and realities of the hosting organization (what to do and not to do)
- Clarify practical and safety questions e.g. important support persons, important phone numbers, addresses in case of emergency etc.
- Capacity building on how to deal with differences (culture, language, way of life, working conditions)
- Getting to know the hosting organization
- Depending on the field of work: particular training (if special competencies are needed in particular working places)





Contents for the seminar:

(→ see also possible time schedule below)

- Arrival and get-together
- Introduction/ orientation to the life and the reality of the host country/hosting region
- Learning about the culture, history, civilization and development issues of the host country
- Instruction on safety issues, emergency prevention
- Getting to know the key support persons and the hosting organization
- Specific training (if special competencies are needed in specific working places)

Possible methods

for: Getting to know each other

a) Each volunteer introduces herself/himself by answering the following questions:

- How do I feel today?
- What is my motivation to do a voluntary service in the context of development cooperation, in this country, in this field of work?
- Where do I come from? Describe the situation you left in Germany? (e.g. “I finished school two months ago”, “Just two days before departure I graduated from university”.....)

for: Getting to know the host organization

a) **Speech/presentation** about the history and the philosophy of the organization, main fields of work, guidelines, number of staff members

b) A more interactive scenario than a speech would be a **quiz show** with questions on the key information about the hosting organization.

c) In addition to or as an alternative to a speech, a quiz or **round tour through** different departments of the **organization** etc. could be offered



for: Introduction/ orientation in the life and the reality of the host country/hosting region

a) **Experience local food products and cooking:** Go to a local market as a group. Which food products are typical for the region, for the host country? How are they prepared, what do they taste like?

b) **“Alternative sightseeing”** in a town or a region: visit both, places of interest, historic sites as well as “unusual sights” like a homeless shelter, a non-governmental organization, other development projects, etc. in order to reflect on the development and social issues of the region.

The projects you visit could also be future working places of volunteers.

for: Learning about the culture, history, civilization and development issues of the host country

a) Instead of a speech or a presentation you can engage in the previously mentioned **“alternative sightseeing”**

b) Instead of a speech or a presentation you could show **a film** referring to the history, civilization or development issues of the host country.

A screening of a film should be followed by a mandatory discussion and reflection

3



Sample schedule for an orientation seminar:

Time	1 st day	2 nd day	3 rd day
Morning	Arrival/ get-together Questions and prospects on the seminar	Safety rules and emergency prevention (what to do and not to do) for the host country	The role of a volunteer in a working place in the context of development cooperation
Noon	Food shopping in a local market Experience local food products and cooking	“Alternative sightseeing”	Becoming familiar with future hosting organization*
Evening	Film and introduction to the history, culture and civilization of the host country	After “alternative sightseeing”: Reflection and discussion about development issues of the region	Becoming familiar with future hosting organization*

*Recommendations and ideas:

If the introduction seminar is arranged for a larger group of volunteers who will later work for different organizations and working places, the schedule could be as follows: On the 3rd day the group can be split up in order to become familiar with their respective hosting organizations.

If specific training is required you should possibly schedule a 4th day for that. Those units could be offered separately upon arrival at the particular project.



TOOL 3: FIRST ORIENTATION IN THE COUNTRY – A CASE STUDY

Introduction to the host project:

Case Study: CAMEROON BAPTIST CONVENTION HEALTH BOARD.

Person in Charge: Mentor, attached to host organization

Introduction: The CBC Health Board has about 10 host project sites in six regions of Cameroon and volunteers can choose to join any site.

From the application, which the host organization and (or) mentor receives at least 2 months prior to the arrival of the volunteers, the areas of interest of the volunteers are noted before their arrival.

After pickup, a meal and rest time, the volunteers are introduced to the first host project site, which is in the same town of their arrival airport.

The volunteers then travel for six hours by car to Bamenda, where the headquarters of the hosting organization are located. During the trip, the volunteers are introduced to certain realities in Cameroon like bargaining, greetings, culture, etc

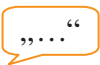
The volunteers live in Bamenda for at least two weeks – where they are introduced to the market, participate in the introductory seminar, are introduced to the headquarters staff and presented with the host projects. They receive **guidance** in making a **decision** of where they will want to work and live.

After two weeks of orientation in Bamenda, the volunteers are shuttled to their various project sites – Bansa, Mutengene, LAP, etc.

CHAPTER 4: REGULAR CONTACT



Intensive communication does play a major role in particular at the beginning of the volunteer service and frequently happens automatically because of the numerous questions volunteers will ask. As the volunteers assimilate, the need for information eventually may decline. Hence, regular discourse is no longer as crucial as it once was. It appears as if everything is just taking its course and the volunteer is managing well. However, when we shared our experiences in the working group, **the lack of intensive or forthright communication was often the main source of problems.** The following excerpts from actual interviews with mentors underscore this fact:



“I don’t know when it started, but at some point our volunteer did not seem to be happy anymore. When she came in the morning, she didn’t smile and it seemed like her tasks did not really fit her anymore. One day she came in and said that she wanted to quit and go back to Germany.”

“I’m the official mentor but there have been some problems, because I did not get informed. Once the volunteers got sick and I did not know about this – so there was nothing I could do – until I realized.”

“Our volunteers keep sending these reports to their sending organization but we don’t know what’s in there. If there is a problem, shouldn’t we be the first ones to know before the German sending organizations get the wrong information?”

“I had these problems as a mentor: I was not included – the sending organization and the hosting organization made agreements over the phone and I did not know about them, even if it affected the volunteers.”

There was supposed to be some money for a language course but when I asked about it, it was already spent on something else”.

Continuous and reliable communication is a significant foundation for a successful international voluntary service.

This type of communication does not assist with the resolution of problems. Committed and respectful communication creates **trust**, trigger **change** and foster the **learning process** and **empathy for each other**. In this context, communication always takes place no matter what – as so eloquently said in this quote: *It is impossible not to communicate*. Informative and gainful communication does, however, require care and includes binding agreements, structuring and must occur at regular intervals.

The communications levels in international voluntary services pertain to different stakeholders in the volunteer service field. They are usually depicted in a so-called triangle or square of stakeholders:



In international voluntary services, the flow of information between all stakeholders has to be transparent. The regular exchange is therefore relevant for the following:

1. Regular contact with the volunteer
2. Regular contact with the other stakeholders:
Sending and hosting organization

1. Regular contact with the volunteer

Regular contacts between the mentor and the volunteer can offer the opportunity to exchange information, discuss problems and foster intercultural learning. Even if the volunteer will in most cases have assimilated to the host country, he or she may still be exposed to encounters with other people that might prove **irritating** for the volunteer. In other cases a volunteer may remain an exotic entity for an entire year that constantly draws attention to himself or herself in the new environment for the duration of the voluntary service. At long last, such a situation may prove strenuous for the volunteer. In some cases, the work may also no longer be satisfying for a volunteer after a few months or the volunteer may not consider the work enough of a challenge.

During an extended stay abroad, many volunteers experience what we refer to as a **culture shock**. While everything goes perfectly at the beginning of the service and the volunteer is initially fascinated by everything, this perception may change as the months progress. The volunteer may get irritated, language problems continue or he or she gets homesick.

The possibility to talk about these and other challenges; to find compassion with a contact, can already be very helpful for the emotional state of the volunteer. After all, it is easier to find solutions for change with the assistance of another person. A mentor can be helpful by **being there** for the volunteer during a conversation and he or she can **clarify misunderstandings** related to cultural or character driven conduct of the locals. At the

same time, the volunteer has the opportunity to explain something about his or her own personality and culture.



Regular communications foster the **mutual learning process** and **understanding**. It does help if the occasions for communication are initiated by the mentor at the start of the volunteer service, e.g. by offering to meet somewhere. As time progresses, it is fine to expect the volunteer to initiate such meetings more frequently. The purpose of these conversations is to share experiences related to all relevant topics: The everyday work situation of the volunteer, the interaction in a foreign language, leisure time activities, the relationship with loved ones left behind at home, etc. These meetings do not have to always take place in a formal office setting. Walks, an invitation to a meal,

an encounter at a pub or an excursion can be great opportunities for a talk. If a mentor is in charge of several volunteers, it may also be a great option to arrange joint meetings with all volunteers. This will extend the opportunity to talk to others to the community of volunteers as a whole.



In *Tool 4: Feedback form for regular contact between mentor and volunteer* you will find a list of questions you can use as a basis for such conversations.

2. Contact between the stakeholders: sending organization - hosting organization – mentor – project

Regular contact matters not only as far as the relationship between mentor and volunteer is concerned but also between the mentor, the sending and the hosting organization. The stakeholders should be **informed** about the most important issues regarding the volunteer's life. They should cover, among other things, the following topics: the general well-being, the working situation, the social life and the learning process of the volunteer as well as any cases of emergency.

Time/regularly scheduled communication:

Due to the progress of the cooperation project and the voluntary service, it makes sense for the stakeholders to talk once a week (SO-HO-Mentor) in the beginning. The regular sharing of information **prevents** misunderstandings, improper planning and as a consequence, the duplication of work. Actual project options might need to be discussed along with a further course for the project. If things go well, it will be sufficient to have one contact a month later on. For the above cited project progress to be made, it is also helpful to conduct a **midterm evaluation** and a **final evaluation** among the stakeholders. Finally, the working group members considered it important to have in place a dependable contingency plan for emergencies, including one ensuring the expeditious exchange of information between SO-HO-Mentor.

Means of contact:

Of course, it's always best to have face-to-face interactions whenever possible (e.g. to have a meeting with the mentor and hosting placement, when the SO is at the midterm seminar). If this is not possible, each organization should identify the optimum means of communication: e-mail, telephone calls, Skype or even regular mail. Important documents should never be sent as originals.

The mentor as a “central” stakeholder

Depending on each mentor's practice, the mentor can be the “central” platform who distributes the shared information. In any event, the mentor is the one who takes care of the important issues concerning the volunteer's life. This includes that he/she needs to be **briefed on all decisions** that concern the volunteer, e.g. by being part of the appropriate mailing lists or receiving calls about urgent information.



Consulting and Training

We discussed one practical example that provides an appropriate model. In this case, a mentor had trained the hosting organization before they received the volunteer. Such training transfers the **idea** and **meaning of a voluntary service**, its different phases and how to render proper support. Furthermore, this could yield a double benefit: assuming an adequate professional experience the mentor could consult not only the volunteer service but also the project itself from an **outside perspective**.

Get-together event: Exchange with other mentors and hosting organizations

A great idea to improve the communication and exchange between the stakeholders would be the hosting of a **get-together event** with all project placements in one region and the mentor(s) supporting these projects.

The get-together could be offered in a rather informal setting and atmosphere. It could be a joint lunch or a sharing session, during which participants could discuss different practices, challenges, experiences, etc. It can certainly also be beneficial to invite some volunteers to talk about their experiences.



TOOL 4: FEEDBACK FORM FOR REGULAR CONTACT BETWEEN MENTOR AND VOLUNTEER

Aim

The volunteer and the mentor should have the opportunity to reflect upon and to exchange their experiences with each other. It's also important for the volunteer to have the chance to talk about challenges and experiences at work and in his/her social life/interactions.

Initiation of contact: Especially in the beginning of an international voluntary service the mentor should initiate the opportunity to meet and exchange. These contacts should continue on a regular basis; however, it's also the responsibility of the volunteer to contact the mentor, whenever he/she needs to.

Time/frequency: At the beginning of the voluntary service it's important to offer regular (weekly) contact opportunities (such as meetings/ activities). Depending on the needs of the volunteer and the situation, the intensity of the contacts can be reduced after a few months. In the beginning, it's good to meet face-to-face. As time progresses, it may be sufficient to use the telephone and/or Internet in some situations.

Setting: The contact with the volunteer should take place in a friendly setting. In order to create a **confidential atmosphere** between mentor and volunteer, it is also important to have informal meetings like going for walks, meeting at a pub in the evening, going for a trip together etc. To take the volunteer out of his every-day living and working environment is important and helps to prevent burnout situations for the volunteer. Consequently, the mentor should support the volunteer by offering "recreational activities." From our experience it's best to blend formal and informal occasions. If you are a mentor for more than one volunteer, it can be helpful to meet with the entire group on some occasions.



In the following, we have provided a list of questions you might ask. They are categorized by different situations that typically affect the everyday routines of the volunteer (work, language, social interactions, and practical arrangements). The objective is certainly not to address each one of these questions; rather the questions may give you an **inspiration for topics** of discussion with the volunteer. This will help you to use questions to break the ice whenever needed. Always keep in mind that you should have time and pay attention to topics the volunteer brings up himself or herself. As always, it makes sense to take notes during meetings. Write down the most important bullet points, so that you can refer to them the next time you meet.

Questions for meetings and feedback

1. Questions related to work

- Please describe the work you do within the project.
- How do you feel at this time? Are you satisfied? Is the work too much for you? Do you not have enough of a work load to keep you busy?
- How could you use your knowledge, skills and experiences?
- In which areas could you still broaden your knowledge/ your skills?
- How would you describe the relationship with your co-workers?
- How would you describe the relationship with the target group?
- Looking at the agreement: which goals have been achieved, which goals have to be changed?
- Do you feel comfortable addressing feedback/criticism within the organization?
- Do you get enough feedback from the team/colleagues?

2. Language questions

- How would you describe your language improvement?
- Do you need further support from us and if so, what kind?



- Do you need further support from third parties, and if so, what kind (e.g. language course)?

3. Social interaction/ network

- How easy/ hard is it for you to get in contact/in touch with other people?
- How well integrated do you feel (e.g. in your neighborhood, city, host family)?
- How well are you able to communicate with your loved ones at home?
- Do you need help with arrangements for your leisure time?

4. Practical arrangement

- How comfortable are you with your living arrangements/conditions?
- How well do you manage your finances?
- Do you need any support as far as your physical health is concerned (e.g. food, medical care, medications)?
- How would you rate your level of your mobility?
- Do you feel safe in your surroundings?
- Do you need any help in any of these areas?

5. Feedback from the mentor related to the work and learning progress

- I'm satisfied with..../ I would like you to....
- My observation regarding your skills is.../ I think you could also use...
- What do you think about developing...skills?/ we can offer....
- My observation about your relationship with your co-workers is....
- My observation about your relationship with the target group is...

Before concluding the conversation, it is helpful to agree on one or two points to work on until you talk the next time!

CHAPTER 5: CRISIS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



Alberto Garcia, coordinator for mentors in Vive Mexico

“One of the best things to do for a successful emergency management is to ensure excellent preparations have been made prior to the volunteers’ arrival. I always say: ten minutes of preparation is worth more than 10 hours of correction. In our experience this means building a network of institutions like hospitals, security institutions and civil protection. All these institutions will handle information whenever

something is happening. For example, we had the crisis with the Tsunami. Of course, you can rely on the TV but sometimes you can get really confusing and conflicted information from different channels on TV. If we ask the civil protection agencies directly, we get much more specific and correct information. So to establish a good network has helped us a lot because we can provide information for the volunteers and the projects as a basis for good decision-making.”

Emergency management is of vital importance in order to guarantee the quality of international voluntary services.

As crisis situations in international voluntary services **can never be completely avoided**, the development of a well-structured and successful emergency management is of great importance. It provides helpful instructions to all stakeholders involved to be **prepared for diverse crisis situations**, such as physical and mental problems, emotional stress, accidents, assaults, civil disturbances etc. As mentioned above it is recommendable to

include all stakeholders into the information chain who are responsible for the volunteer at a certain point of the mentoring process.

Preparation and collaboration – essentials of crisis and emergency management

Instruction and training of volunteers

The instruction starts with the provision of information and training to the volunteers **prior** to their departure from home. The sending organization should brief the volunteers well ahead of the assignment of special safety rules for the host country. A training at the pre-departure seminar should include instructions on safety rules, the discussion of fears and reflection on own attitudes (precautious, over-anxiousness, adventurous nature, etc.).

Upon arrival in the host country, a special unit on safety rules and emergency intervention should be part of the introductory-seminar. If there is no introduction seminar right at the beginning, please make sure that the volunteers are briefed on safety rules and precautions for the host country and their working region immediately upon arrival.

5

What could be defined as a crisis or an emergency situation?

Crisis:

- Excessive demands of the volunteer at his/her place of assignment because of mental issues or lack of qualification
- Volunteers fail to cope with their situation in the host country for an unusually long period of time (living and working conditions)
- Volunteers are suffering from “culture shock” for too long, isolate themselves and/or start to seek refuge in drugs
- Volunteers have permanent health problems
- Volunteers refuse all support offered to them by the support staff in the host country

- Cases of personal distress (e.g. death of a family member, conflicts within their family or their relationship, other personal problems)
- Lasting irrevocable conflicts between volunteers and local colleagues at their working places or local support persons due to a lack of language skills leading to miscommunication or due to a lack of respect for the local customs

Urgent emergency situations:

- Accidents
- Outbreak of war, danger of civil wars or violent riots in the region
- Natural disasters (e.g. flood, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide etc.)
- Legal aid in case of criminal prosecution (e.g. arrest)
- Life-threatening diseases and deaths
- The need of repatriation or transport to another country for a better medical treatment
- Diverse desperate issues that have to be resolved immediately

Intervention in crisis and emergency situations

In case of any **crisis**, please get in touch with the responsible contact person at the hosting organization and if necessary with the German sending organization. Having solved the crisis even without the support of the sending or the hosting organization, please don't forget to inform them promptly thereafter.



In **urgent emergency situations** it is essential to have contact addresses and dates of the main responsible stakeholders handy. Therefore, please refer to *Tool 5: Contact list template* and *Tool 6: Example of an emergency booklet* at the end of this chapter.

What needs to be done?

Outbreak of war, danger of civil wars or violent riots in the region	⇒	contact the embassy of volunteers home country
Natural disasters (e.g. flood, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide etc.	⇒	contact the embassy of volunteers home country
Legal aid in case of criminal prosecution (e.g. arrest)	⇒	contact German embassy of volunteers home country
Life-threatening illness, quick repatriation is required for a better medical treatment	⇒	if you can't reach anybody of the German sending organization, contact the 24h hotline of volunteers assurance*

Contact list of responsible stakeholders (see Tool 5)

Collaboration and transparency between all responsible stakeholders who support the volunteers in both, sending and host country, is of vital importance for successful emergency management. Tool 5 provides an example of such a contact list. It is important to exchange the contact details regularly and to ensure that this list is always handy (paper or/and digital version).

Besides the contact of all supporting persons, other important phone numbers and addresses (e.g. German consulate etc.) should be noted.

Finally, there should be transparency about the volunteers' insurance: ask the sending organization about the conditions of the volunteers' insurance (every German sending organization may work with a different agency and particular conditions might be different). In general the assurance agencies provide a 24h emergency hotline.

Crisis prevention list of the German consulate

Every German citizen, who - even temporarily - lives abroad may be included in one of the crisis prevention lists pursuant to § 6 Paragraph 3 of the German Consular Services Law.

Volunteers are required to exercise this option, so that the mission or the mentor, if necessary, can take action in a crisis or emergency situation quickly and contact other German nationals.

Registration on the Internet is possible:

http://www.konsularinfo.diplo.de/Vertretung/konsularinfo/de/01/EL_EFAND.html

Emergency booklet for volunteers (see Tool 6)

The emergency booklet contains all important information *about* the volunteer and all important contact numbers *for* the volunteer to be used in the event of emergency situations.

The volunteers should always have their emergency booklet handy (e.g. on their person, in pants pockets, bag and posted next to their bed or mirror at their housing unit/accommodations). Furthermore they should exchange copies of the emergency booklet with their support contacts in the host country, the other volunteers, the hosting family etc.

It is recommended to assist volunteers with the completion of their emergency booklets (e.g. emergency telephone numbers, all contact details of support staff in host country, other useful phone numbers like recommended doctors etc.)

Your check list for emergency management

- Providing information on important safety issues in the host country for the sending organization before departure (in general this is the responsibility of the hosting organization)
- Transparent information pertaining to the volunteers' insurance. What are the conditions of the volunteers' insurance?
- Instruction on safety rules and emergency prevention in the host country. Who will provide this information?
- Copies of the emergency booklets
- Contact list is completed regularly by all responsible stakeholders





TOOL 5: CONTACT LIST OF RESPONSIBLE STAKEHOLDERS

	Name	Adress	Fax/email	Telephone Office	Mobile/ telephone private
Sending organization (D)					
Head of organization					
Contact person for volunteers					
Second or other contact persons for volunteers					
Hosting country					
Coordinator of volunteer program at the host country					
Partner organization in host country					
Head of organization			-		
contact person for volunteers at the organization			-		
Other contact persons in cases of emergency			-		
Work place/ project of volunteer					
Contact person of volunteers at the work placement					
Other contacts in case of emergency (e.g. embassy, 24h emergency hotline for volunteers etc.)					

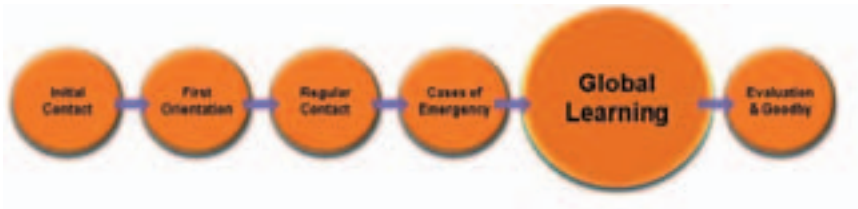


TOOL 6: EMERGENCY BOOKLET FOR VOLUNTEERS

5

Notfallzeitl. - Emergency Paper - Papier d'urgence Foto Notfallzeitl. - Emergency Paper - Papier d'urgence	<p>Name /family name/ nom: _____</p> <p>Vorname/ first name/ surnom: _____</p> <p>Nationalität /nationality/ nationalité: _____</p> <p>Pass -Nr. /passport number/ no. de passeport: _____</p> <p>Geburtsdatum /date of birth/ date de naissance: _____</p> <p>Blutgruppe/ blood group/ groupe sanguin: _____</p>	<p>Kreditkarten-EC-Kartensperrung: _____</p> <p>Service Hotline: _____</p> <p>Medizinische Notfallnummern/ Medical Emergency/ nombre en cas d'urgence: _____</p> <p>Notfalltelefon /Versicherung/ Assurance Emergency Hotline: _____</p> <p>Medizinisches Notfalltelefon (z.B. ftd/A/G/E/H) /Hotline in case of high emergency: _____</p> <p>Notruf im Land/ emergency call in host country/ nombre en cas d'urgence: _____</p> <p>Polizei/Police: _____</p> <p>Feuerwehr/ firefighter/ pompiers: _____</p> <p>Notarzt/ambulance/ médecin d'urgence: _____</p> <p>Krankenhaus/ Hospital/ centre hospitalier: _____</p>	<p>Wichtige Kontakte/important contacts/coordonnées importantes: Botschaft der BRD/Consulate General of Germany/consulat général d'Allemagne Adresse: _____ Telephone: _____ Hotline: _____</p> <p>Im Notfall kontaktieren/ Please contact in case of emergency/en cas d'urgence: _____</p> <p>Eltern/Parents: _____</p> <p>Entsendeorganisation/Sending organisation/organisation d'envoi: _____</p> <p>Im Einsatzland/In Host Country/dans le pays d'accueil: _____</p>
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CHAPTER 6: GLOBAL LEARNING



Vera Wülker, former
volunteer in India

“For me a mentor should be a person who knows the culture of the hosting country as well as the culture of my country. I expect a mentor to be able to deal with problems, e.g. to mediate between me and my advisor at the project in any cases of problems. A good mentor can help me to get a deeper understanding about problems in the hosting country and their global interdependencies.”

“Global learning” can be defined as a pedagogic response to the **ongoing globalization processes**. The objective of global learning is the creation of a deep **understanding of global interdependencies**, of topics such as poverty, healthcare, war, racism and environmental issues. To be specific, this means that e.g. the fostering of more awareness of the following conflict scenarios: How does the consumption of coffee or chocolate in Germany affect the plantation workers and farmers in Honduras or Guatemala? Why is powdered milk sourced in Europe less expensive than regionally produced milk in Kenya and how does this affect the regional economy? How can I, by taking action myself, do something to change the global deficits?

Hence, global learning has two concrete objectives: The first step shows us the problems and perspectives of global developments,

while the second step gives us the opportunity to search for joint **global actions** we can take. Global learning allows us to make contributions to the development of a global value system, of a shared world where justice, human rights and peace are present everywhere.

A voluntary service will improve global learning if the volunteer gets to know the social, political and cultural reality of the hosting country, if he/ she realizes similarities and differences to his own country's situation and if he/she tries to understand where they originate from.


Global learning is one of the goals of a voluntary service in development cooperation, especially in the funding program "weltwärts." As a mentor you do not have to know everything about global learning. But maybe you have an idea that can **facilitate** global learning experiences? Do you know people, other non-government organizations or cultural activities that could help volunteers to understand the social, political or cultural reality of the host country better?



In the following you will find a list of different ideas on how to **integrate and improve global learning experiences** within the volunteer service. It is always important to discuss and **reflect** upon global learning experiences with the volunteers after the learning process. If possible, we would highly recommend inviting some members of the hosting organization, the hosting family or other friends to join the activities. The issue of global learning is not only a topic for volunteers and others should have a chance to be involved in the process as well.

Tools for the facilitation of global learning activities:

1) “Fireside chat without a fireplace”



This is an informal discourse between volunteers and experts from the hosting country or abroad about special topics concerning the social, political or cultural situation of the host country. You will find a practical example of this in *Tool 7: Fireside chat without a fireplace*.

2) Visits to other or similar projects in the country

The opportunity of getting to know different projects will widen the perspective on the social infrastructure in a country and the variety of projects underway. The cultural and religious influences on the projects may become more evident. It is therefore a good idea to visit other projects or NGOs in the country that you are familiar with or visit other projects volunteers are involved in.

3) Visits to places where export products are made

These places are e.g. flower, coffee, tea or other plantations or “Fair Trade” plantations. If you are not involved and don’t know about these places you may want to ask other NGOs or even former volunteers. They may be able to make recommendations based on their own experiences. It’s good to have a critical discussion afterwards.

4) Stay in a village for a few days

It's a very good idea and a unique experience to offer volunteers the opportunity to stay in a village for a few days if the volunteers are otherwise living in cities.

In every country the villages offer a special insight into the local culture and most importantly, into the tough living conditions of a country. This is an insider view not all volunteers experience during their stay. To live in simple conditions for a few days is an important experience for somebody coming from an industrial country. If you have a project of your own in a village involving family members or friends it would be great, if the volunteers would have an opportunity to visit them.

5) Take part in cultural, political or religious events

It can be very beneficial to invite and accompany volunteers to take part in different cultural, political or religious events (e. g. weddings, dinners, demonstrations, religious practices)

To take part in a wedding or another cultural, religious or political event in a foreign country is always a great adventure. It shows the different ways of celebrating, of mourning, the role of religion in life or the political interests of the citizens.

6) Films and documentaries

Another possibility to support the global learning process is to watch documentaries concerning globalization or developmental issues in a group setting. Afterwards you could exchange your views and discuss the movie. Possible movies could be (sometimes volunteers or NGOs have them available):

- We feed the world (mass production of food in the western world)
- Darwin's nightmare (fish of Lake Victoria, Tanzania)
- Lost children (child soldiers in Uganda)





TOOL 7: FIRESIDE CHAT WITHOUT A FIREPLACE

Report from a mentor in Costa Rica:

“Dear Ana,

You asked me about our ideas for global learning. Well, we started with something I would call “a fireside chat without fireplace”. It started like this:

During the last mid-term seminar I discovered a great lack of basic knowledge of the volunteers on the one hand, but also the interest in doing something on the other hand. This is how the idea of a ‘fireside chat without fireplace’ was developed.”

The main idea of the fireside chat is to bring professionals and volunteers together in a relaxed atmosphere. The professionals are telling the volunteers something about a certain country or they are talking about development politics. The professionals will be talking, reporting and narrating, but the volunteers may always interrupt them and ask questions. It should not just be a simple presentation but a real discussion. So far we have carried out three of these evening events. The volunteers were free to attend them, but almost all of them did so. The topics so far have been:

- *Monocultures and agro forest systems*
- *Employment laws and labor unions in Central America*
- *“La Iglesia Lutherna Costarricense es LIBRE”*

Our ideas for further meetings are:

- *Youth gangs (Central America)*
- *Lutheran church in Central America*
- *Further the volunteers can also suggest topics*

We made the experience that it’s best to start with these events at the beginning of an international voluntary service. During the last



three months of a voluntary service the volunteers normally have a lot of things on their mind and may not come. The evenings do not cost much... we estimate the budget at about USD 50.00 for each such evening. The speakers so far have not been paid an allowance. But we pay for the taxi; we buy something to drink and some biscuits. That's all.

The event is open to everybody. The last events were also attended by friends of the volunteers, once there was even a visitor. For the future we also want to encourage other staff members of our hosting organization to join these events. Another idea for the future is, that we want to combine the meeting with a cookery course or a dancing class. So the volunteers will have two aspects in the same time: a practical one and a theoretical one.

So far, we had really good meetings and a good feedback. The volunteers accepted the three topics last year well. The important thing is not the professional knowledge but their authenticity. Not only the professional learning is important, but they should also see that there are people and organizations who put exactly this into practice. It's about professional knowledge and a good example of it!

I will write to you again how we continue but hopefully this already gives you some idea.

Best regards,

Andreas

CHAPTER 7: EVALUATION AND GOODBYE




When the topic of evaluation finally comes up, the volunteer has almost reached the end of his or her international voluntary service. The volunteer, the hosting organization and the mentor have gone through an intense time with each other. A joint assessment gives all of them one more opportunity to **review the entire process and to prepare for the future.**

The concluding joint evaluation of the voluntary service is equally important for the volunteer and for the mentor. They now have a chance to look back over the voluntary service assignment one more time: How did the volunteer experience the early days of his/her voluntary service? What has changed since then? What is the emotional state of the volunteer as he/she gets ready to go home? It can be very enriching to share honest feedback with each other: How did the mentor perceive the volunteer and vice versa? However, it is also relevant to discuss issues that are important for the planning of the next volunteer who is coming. What was good and should stay the same? What could be changed for the next international voluntary service? In which areas does a volunteer need more assistance and in which cases would less be better?

It would be best if the mentor would take the initiative to arrange the final evaluation meeting. If such a meeting takes place about **2 to 3 weeks prior to the end of the service**, there is still enough time for the farewell process and the making of plans for the trip home. If the mentor is not part of the hosting organization, it may also make sense to invite a project employee of the hosting organization to participate in the meeting. As an alternative, it is

also possible to arrange a separate meeting between the hosting organization and the volunteer, which focuses more on the work of the volunteer and the hosting project.

If a joint evaluation between the stakeholders mentor – volunteer – hosting project does not take place, it makes sense for the mentor to conduct another evaluation with the hosting and sending organization.



The final evaluation should include the following areas of the volunteer's service: accommodations, work, support and guidance, organizational issues, reflection on the development of the volunteer during the service, re-entry into Germany and modifications for the next volunteer. In *Tool 8: Evaluation of the international voluntary service* at the end of the chapter you will find some guided questions that may be used during the evaluation process. These questions could be adapted to different methods ensuring that the volunteer feels free to speak his or her mind without feeling coerced. Examples of methods to use could be informal conversations, dinner, final workshop, seminar, etc.

The final evaluation is a **confidential meeting** between the volunteer and the mentor (and in some cases the host project and/or host family). All information and notes should therefore be treated as strictly confidential and should not be shared with any third parties without each party's consent and should also be protected against any unauthorized access. However, to ensure that it can be officially used and in the interest of a good flow of information to the sending and hosting organization, it is necessary for the mentor and the volunteer to compile **joint public minutes** of meeting.

Last, but not least the professional conclusion of an international voluntary service also includes the issuance of a **certificate** or of a professional letter of recommendation for the volunteer, which briefly describes the services rendered and the tasks handles. It should also state how well the volunteer handled his/her responsibilities. The hosting organization, sending organization and the mentor can arrive at a mutual agreement on who will

issue this letter of recommendation and what its specific contents will be.

In Instrument 8 you will find a questionnaire, which can be used for the joint evaluation between mentor and volunteer.





TOOL 8: EVALUATION FORM FOR THE FINAL EVALUATION IN THE HOST COUNTRY

A final evaluation is very important in the volunteering process. The mentor should make sure that the evaluation is done. Below are some guided questions that might be used during the evaluation process. These questions could be adapted to different methods ensuring that the volunteer is at ease to air out his/her views without being forced. Examples of methods to use can be informal talks, dinner, final workshops, seminar, etc.

The mentor may also ensure that feedback is given to the appropriate actors like the host family, working place, partner organization, sending organization, and other support persons.

The final evaluation does not have to be done like a questionnaire. Especially if the evaluation takes place in a seminar or in a group of volunteers we can recommend using more **active methods**, like the following:

- the volunteers could interview each other and write down the most important issues
- “sozio-dynmaic formation” – the volunteers form up in a line according to different themes (e.g. the accommodation was very good – very bad etc.)
- theater method: the volunteers act out different scenes (e.g. what has been difficult/ how did they experience their working tasks etc.) – afterwards you may reflect together about the different themes
- graph of mood: each volunteer draws an individual graph according to their “mood-level”. How did they feel in the beginning of the service, how did they feel after two months etc. Afterwards you can reflect about it – how did everyone deal with challenges?
- written protocols: the volunteers write in a “silent discussion” according to different subjects

The evaluation between mentor and volunteer(s) should be voluntarily and treated confidential. However it would be good to



give a short summary of the evaluation - esp. points that are of importance for further voluntary services – to the sending and hosting organization.

Questions:

1. Accommodation

Host Family

- What were the positive and negative experiences you had (e.g. with neighbors, the local population, security, privacy)
- Did you feel integrated as a member of the family or as a guest?
- Would you suggest to cooperate with this family again or recommend it for the next volunteers?

Private or within the Host Project

- What were the positive and negative experiences you had (e.g. with neighbors, the local population, security, privacy)?
- Did you feel integrated in the local community or have you been lonely?
- Would you recommend a similar accommodation for the next volunteers or would you suggest finding a different accommodation, for example in a host family?

2. Work

- How was the introduction? Did you feel guided especially in the beginning?
- Did you feel integrated as a member of staff? How was the communication flow with the staff?
- Did you feel well with your accomplished tasks?
- Have there been times when you felt limited in qualification for your task?



- Did you sometimes feel you were not needed? When?
- Would you recommend your working tasks and working place for the next volunteers?

3. Support and guidance

- Did you feel guided enough by your mentor or other support persons?
- Did you have the chance to talk about everything that was difficult for you?
- How was the communication gap?
- Would you recommend your mentor again or do you know of another person that would fit this role?

4. General

- How did you deal with cultural differences, religion, and language?

5. Review of volunteering process and of re-entry in Germany

- If given the opportunity, would you do the voluntary service again?
- Against all negative experiences, what can you say you have achieved?
- In which aspect have you changed personally as a result of your volunteering experience?
- What do you still want to do before you leave the country?
- What do you expect as you go back home? How do you feel about it? Do you feel prepared, scared?
- What kind of support do you need for your returning?

- Being aware of the fact that you might be considered as an ambassador, what are you going to tell about the country and the people as you go back home?

SOME FINAL WORDS....

Our **Mentoring Toolkit and Guide** ends here. We have completed a long and intense journey. During our three meetings we have been discussing the issues at length; we have developed and structured pertinent solutions. After returning home to our different countries of residence, we did our homework, also. We wrote reports and guidelines, reviewed them and made adjustments. An initial draft of this Mentoring Toolkit and Guide was subsequently also presented on the occasion of an international conference in Bonn (Nov. 2010), where it was discussed. Ultimately, we gave it our best effort to bundle all important insights and work tools in this Mentoring Toolkit.

Nevertheless, the time we had available to work on this as a team and the scope of this Mentoring Toolkit did have to be **limited**. Consequently, we were unable to describe all potential situations and many of the experiences, tips and ideas did not make it into this Mentoring Toolkit and Guide. We were compelled to neglect some aspects completely.

In particular questions related to **improved support and accompaniment for mentors**, e.g. in the form of training sessions, supervision and advice provided by colleagues were not taken into account in this publication. These areas require more financial and staff resources overall, as well as better political and structural frameworks. However, we are planning to continue to pursue these aspects and intend to make them accessible when the time is right – in a supplement to this Mentoring Toolkit.

To be able to accomplish this, we also rely on you. Hence we invite you **to share your experiences and reports**. We are looking forward to receiving your input. On our website **www.ivs-quality-toolkit.org** you will find a large portion of the ideas and tools set forth herein in the *Mentoring* section. You are invited to go to this section and to use the comment functions to submit your experiences, insights on your challenges, own examples or templates or unresolved issues. We would be happy to see you as

a visitor on this website and hope that this Toolkit will be fun to read for you and that you will be able to use some of the tools to assist you with your own activities!


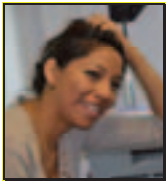



Best regards from Cameroon, Kenya, Mexico, Neuwied, Hanover, Bonn and Cologne


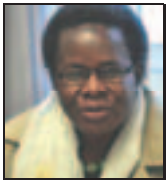



THE IDEA AND FRAMEWORK OF THE MENTORING GUIDE AND TOOLKIT

The Mentoring Guide and Toolkit has been developed by an international working group of member organizations of the “Protestant Forum for Voluntary Services in Development Cooperation” (eFeF) and their international partners. Both, the working group and also this Mentoring Guide and Toolkit have been initiated in the framework of a cooperative research study (project leader Prof. Dr. Josef Freise) between “eFeF” and the “Catholic University of Applied Sciences in North Rhine Westphalia” (KatHO). The two-year study sought to research for transcultural and participatory quality development and furthermore to develop practical instruments to ensure and develop the quality in international voluntary services. If interested any further, you will find more information –also covering issues such as organisational partnership/cooperation and policies/structures in international voluntary services – on the website www.ivs-quality-toolkit.org. This website provides interaction and the opportunity to rate and comment on instruments, as well as to down- and upload tools and suggestions.

Besides the following writers this Mentoring Toolkit and Guide was supported by many individuals with their respective ideas, interviews and feedback. We want to particularly express our gratitude to all the other members of the international working group. Thank you so much Julia Böhm, Damaris Bosler, Alberto García, Andrej Girleanu, Jiska Ilan, Karola Kienel, Raxsmey Koy, Hanifah Namukasa, Eckhard Röhm, William Stanley, Angela Starovoytova, Jan Stöber and Vera Wülker for all your inputs, examples and thoughts that contributed intensively to this Mentoring Guide and Toolkit.

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Mentoring in international voluntary services is a challenge!

The specific role and particular responsibilities of mentors within international voluntary services are often not yet fully clarified and moreover, **practical tools** to support the mentoring process are hard to come by. Therefore an international working group of member organizations of the Protestant Forum for Voluntary Services in Development Cooperation (eFeF), their international partners and former volunteers designed this **Mentoring Guide and Toolkit** as a collection of tools based on their personal experiences and practical requirements. The aim of this guideline and its tools is to provide a helpful reference for the pedagogical work and accompaniment of international volunteers - **proposed by practitioners for practitioners**.

