



## Motivations for the work of the volunteer today



This document forms part of a collection of 6 reference documents used in the formation of those who prepare members of the International volunteer scheme and also for these volunteers themselves. These documents contain the development of the theme and also proposals to work on the theme in individual or group dynamics. Apart from the topic in hand, there are other documents on: the definition of the International volunteer scheme; the volunteer scheme in intercultural contexts; a model of development: accompaniment and conflict management. These materials are all available in our offices or through the website [www.alboan.org](http://www.alboan.org)

## **Index**

### ***To Start:***

#### **Introduction**

##### ***To make an in depth analysis***

##### **Why is there a need for a volunteer team?**

Reasons for counting on volunteers

Reasons for organizations which send out volunteers and the host organizations.

##### **Possible imaginary situations of the volunteer team. Expectations.**

Concerning the volunteers themselves

The organizations which send out of volunteers and their reception.

##### **When all is not as we had imagined.**

**“To marry” imaginary hopes, expectations and motivations to the existing reality on the inward and outward journey.**

Guidelines for volunteers

Guidelines for the organizations which send out volunteers

Guidelines for the Host organizations

##### ***By way of conclusion***

**The experience of the international volunteer teams: challenge and need.**

##### ***How to put everything into practice:***

Dynamics of how to get to know oneself

Dynamics of the awareness of real situations in each country involved

Dynamics to deal with topics in more depth: volunteer teams, motivations, expectations.

Communication dynamics.

##### **When not everything goes as we had planned**

Guidelines for volunteers

Guidelines for the organizations sending out the volunteers

##### ***By way of conclusion***

## Motivations for the work of the volunteer team today

### To Start

#### Introduction

The international volunteer scheme is one of the fundamental bases of international solidarity which we know in the present day. Despite this, it remains a little known reality in the field of international cooperation and even less in legal matters. Up to a few years ago, the experience of being in an International volunteer team<sup>1</sup> was one way of initiating those who were interested, into the world of international solidarity. It consisted of volunteer work of variable duration, from experiences of a short duration<sup>2</sup>, to a great diversity of long term experiences. This made it possible for many people and their entities to have direct or relatively direct contact with the reality of impoverished countries. We are speaking here of the experiences of missionaries, International brigade members, adventurers and those with a political or social commitment.

The context has changed and so too has the international volunteer scheme. Amongst the changes that have been taking place in the last few years we could highlight: (1) The offering of studies linked to themes of co-operation, education for development and Human Rights; (2) The consolidation of a well structured and professional sector of International co-operation (3) the promotion of volunteer groups on the part of public institutions at the beginning of the nineties;(4) the structuring of public programmes of awareness, formation and practical work by people interested in international solidarity: (5) recognition and development of the figure of co-operator in international cooperation and (6) The development in other European countries of certain legislation and cover for these volunteers and co-operators.

All these changes have opened up the possibility for a greater number of people to develop a certain sensitivity towards International solidarity and some of them in this environment of solidarity have discovered a space for professional development, This growth at the level of Civil Society has taken place parallel to the development of this same sector from local sector to international.

All these changes have widened horizons. Many more possibilities are open to those who wish to collaborate. There is a greater diversity but, at the same time, there is a greater specification of each one of the offers. Parallel to this increase in possibilities, we have also seen an increase in persons interested in this sector with a wide variety of motivations. This document will deal with precisely the subject of motivation.

We consider that, at this present moment, the social organisations, the people interested and the public institutions are all in a process of clarification and adaptation to these new realities. And it is in this framework that we can see that the motivations expectations of the volunteers, the organisations who send them out and the Host organizations and have varied. Therefore, we need to take stock of this fact and adapt both the objectives of the volunteer programmes and the formation, tasks and accompaniment of the experience itself.

---

<sup>1</sup> The subject of the International volunteer scheme is dealt with in more depth in “Titulo del Documento .Bilbao ALBOAN 2010

<sup>2</sup> We understand experience of a short duration as between a few weeks to 3 months. The experiences of longer duration refer to between six months and three years.

## *In depth reflection*

### **Why do we opt for and support a volunteer programme?**

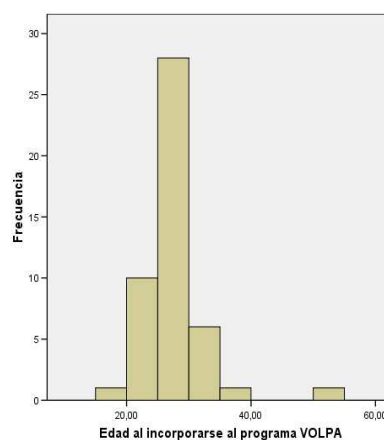
As mentioned before, the option for a volunteer system is the basis and foundation of many of the movements and institutions linked to international solidarity which we are familiar with today.

The organizations with a tradition of experience in the volunteer system have continued, in most cases as usual. However, on carrying out a greater number of activities and actions, the presence of the volunteers in their organisational schemes, at least relatively, has lost importance. And also just as in these organisations as in those newly created, the preferential option has been for short term projects of the International volunteer system and/ or for co-operators.

### **Why do we need volunteers?**

In the last few years, organizations like ours which work with the International volunteer scheme, have noted, in general, changes in the profile of the people interested in the experience of the volunteer system. These people, on average, are older than those who came to us fifteen years ago.<sup>3</sup>. This can be seen quite clearly in the case of long term volunteer experiences although not so obvious in short experiences. Yet at the same time we are experiencing a certain trend here too. Those who are interested in a volunteer experience, in many cases, come to us with previous work experience. And contrary to what used to happen before, many of these people approach the International volunteer system with hardly any experience of volunteer work in general and, less still, in the field of international solidarity. At the same time, what is clear and surprising in the case of long term experiences where we find an equal balance between men and women volunteers in the field of international solidarity.

The distribution by age groups can be seen in Graphic 1. The average age of incorporation is 27 give or take five years.



Graphic 1: age on joining the VOLPA programme.

This change of profile means that the motivations and expectations of the volunteers are different when they approach the social organisations which promote volunteer schemes. In the first place, in the past, the ideological component and the social commitment were preponderant in most people along with, in many cases, a religious option. Today the principal motivation seems to be the search for personal growth. In short term experiences in which the participants are younger personal growth means a component of professional growth or an opportunity to put into practice their professional capabilities. In the case of long term experiences, the volunteers want to prove themselves in other contexts, to "find" themselves and, in coming into contact with others who are different, to grow and examine their own life options in depth. This change of paradigm from a more modern volunteer system to a post-modern one, and also in the case of a society or institution

<sup>3</sup> In a study carried out on long term volunteer projects (two years) VOLPA expresses that the average age of the volunteer is 27.. <http://www.alboan.org/portal/documentos.asp?id=73>

which promotes modern volunteer systems and other post-modern ones must be reflected in their own volunteer programmes too.

The transformation we point out does not deny the existence of different motivations in the volunteer system, however, it does indicate a change in the preponderance and importance of the same, and a change in those motivations shown years ago, in an age of ideologies. Today now a search for a meaning to life moves us quite clearly to opt for volunteer work.

At the same time we must be aware of the existence of other motivations which are not so favourable for the experience: these could hold weight in the taking of decisions such as those related to a running away from a work situation where I am not satisfied, or escaping from affective or family relationships. There are cases where this escaping from a situation which we don't know how to manage has a significant importance. In these cases we should face up to the situation as soon as possible and leave it solved. If this is not done before participating in the international volunteer system, it is quite probable that this situation travels with the volunteer in his rucksack and remains present throughout the experience.

In any case, we must point out that amongst the volunteers, there is always a cocktail of motivations which include a spirit of adventure, an ideological motive, justice and faith movements, an altruistic aim or the search for meaning in one's life or professional growth.

In function of the motivation, the expectations with respect to what one wants to get out of the experience are different. Recognising and specifying the motivations could facilitate - the same applies to the volunteers as to those who send them out and the hosts - the volunteers' greater awareness of the changes taking place in them throughout the experience. In one moment of the experience some of the motivations are satisfied (experiencing a different reality, getting to know another culture, carrying out a specific task) and we count them done. What happens then is that we aspire to fulfil more expectations. It's good to be aware of this at the outset; to make our targets specific, and, evaluate, in different moments of the experience, if it meets the expectations of the volunteers.

### **The reasons for the existence of the organisations which send out volunteers and for the host organizations**

Both the organizations which send out volunteers and the Host organizations have amongst their objectives the formation and preparation of the volunteers, and at the same time, the opening up of "spaces" in society. Both organisations belong to civil society and the persons sensitive to the themes they defend; those who accompany and support these, constitute the basis of their work.

For these organisations, the volunteer scheme is a clear expression of their option to construct a society qualified and committed to the creation of societies and a more dignified world for everyone, especially for those who do not have so many resources.

In many of these organisations, especially in the North, the volunteer scheme permits the communication of personal experiences in a better way. We have the potential to transmit these experiences in a clear and simple way, to get the message through to people. This message reaches those in close contact with the volunteer and those who, otherwise, would not receive this information. For most of the organizations involved, the volunteer scheme is an open door for their group to get to know the reality of situations in other countries.

At the same time, the volunteer contributes to the forging of new relationships amongst the organisations involved and a closer relationship with mutual understanding. And, as we said in the introduction, we move towards our goal- a greater solidarity and the creation of a better world; a world where these relationships become essential. This would be a world where time, rhythms of life or processes are not imposed on anyone but, rather, where the conditions of those we work with are respected. We need to create a world where economic affairs do not control everything in such an irreversible way.

## **Possible options of the volunteer scheme. Reasons and expectations.**

### **About the volunteers**

To become a volunteer is an important decision in one's life. It means leaving home and family to go to live amongst other people one doesn't even know.

It is a fundamental decision; the longer the duration of the volunteer experience, the more serious is the decision. At the time of making the decision, some ideas and ways of imagining the experience should be taken into account

Although the volunteers appear to be open to being sent to any place and to do whatever there is to do, subconsciously there are elements present which encourage them to face up to the experience. Amongst these elements we find: (1) the idea of having a satisfactory experience and open relationships with whom they are going to work; (2) the idea we can really offer something in the specific task and that we will see the results of what we have done; (3) that I will be made welcome and be recognised for my work, etc.

In most cases, for women volunteers, the order of priority would be that which we have presented whilst male volunteers give more importance to the work to be done rather than to the field of relationships. In either case, in general, the volunteer values the positive aspects of the experience and hopes for personal growth from it. However, it doesn't enter into our imagination that to grow, generally, means we have to slip up sometimes; we have to overcome difficulties and manage to control conflicts.

Normally, when the volunteers return, they also give an account of the overall experience especially all the positive things but, at the same time, they minimize the difficulties, the conflicts etc. But the reality which is always above fiction, is not as we imagined it to be and, sometimes, the following occurs: (1) possibly the volunteers are not sufficiently appreciated (this happens most in the case of women volunteers); (2) or working in a group is too difficult or (3) the volunteers, the communities or the organizations are not perfect; (4) or, finally, maybe the reality is not as pleasant as we had imagined; (5) and even the climate could affect us too much.

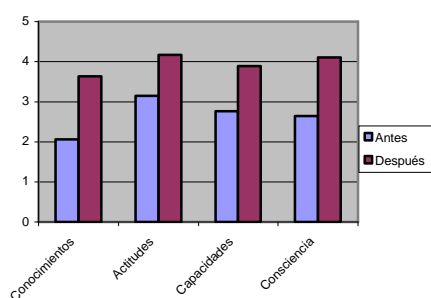
### **Organizations responsible for sending out the volunteers.**

The organization which sends out the volunteer is willing and committed to offering the chosen experience just as it was promised at the outset: (1) where the volunteer is accompanied before, during, and on return from the experience (2) where the volunteer will be able to contribute to development and to the work of the organization which cooperates with the organization who sent him out, and (3) where this contributes to the encouraging of yet more people to make a commitment to equality and solidarity in the world.

To achieve our objective we carry out a process of selection, formation, orientation, and accompaniment of the volunteer both for the work with the send out organizations and also the follow-up and evaluation of the experience with the different protagonists involved.

In the workshops held with the send out organizations we have seen that the key factor is the work of awareness and sensitivity, so much so with the volunteer, the society he comes from as also the society which receives him. In many programmes of the volunteer system the objectives are sensitivity and awareness, but the organizations have difficulties in finding indicators as to whether this has been achieved or not. Sometimes, the way to see the results means checking, on their return, if these volunteers have fitted in with the dynamics of their send out organizations. But, as this aspect, in most cases was not a specific objective of the programme, we have no way of measuring this. However, there are other ways of evaluating the impact of the experience. We need to consider the impact in the South, in the community of origin and do the same with the returning volunteer.

A research Project carried out by ALBOAN on the International volunteer system<sup>4</sup>, in which there was an evaluation of changes produced in the international competence of the volunteers, changes had taken place especially in the acquisition of knowledge of other realities and cultures and an awareness of diversity. Changes in attitudes and capacities were the most difficult to prove. The volunteers themselves could not express clearly how much the experience had taught them etc.



Graphic

		X	N	DT
Knowledge	After	3,64	49,00	0,65
	Before	2,06	49,00	0,50
Attitudes	After	4,17	49,00	0,46
	Before	3,15	49,00	0,78
Capacities	After	3,89	49,00	0,59
	Before	2,77	49,00	0,71
Awareness	After	4,10	49,00	0,55
	Before	2,65	49,00	0,64

Table 2: Development of skills

## 2: Development of skills

### Organizations which receive the volunteers

The host organizations do this because they are aware of what the volunteers can offer; new experiences, a new way of seeing and evaluating the organization, a reference for the people involved who see an option for solidarity and an obvious help in the tasks to be carried out.

This is an option which is not free from difficulties in dialogue and in the intercultural living “space”, but we consider that it could help the community immensely. During the different experiences, difficulties could arise: (1) It could be that a particular volunteer scheme cannot or will not accept the rules of play and questions the organization, (2) or maybe affective relationships arise which could condition the way work is carried out, (3) there maybe excessive political emphasis or the volunteer could be too much in the public eye and finally (4) the task may not be within the volunteer’s capacity or not meet up to his expectations. There have been cases where, with the agreement of both parties, the volunteer experience finished before time.

In spite of the difficulties, in most cases, the final evaluation of the experience is positive. At the same time, from the conflicts or problems resolved it is clear that there have been new learning experiences both for the individuals involved as for the organizations themselves. In the same way the debates and the agreement of opinions between the organizations who send out volunteers and the Host organizations can help to underline elements in common and/ or the different elements which both institutions offer.

One of the changes we have noticed in the last few years is that both the organizations which send out volunteers and the Host organizations are becoming more professional. This means we are able to ask for more clearly defined profiles and for tasks for which, in many cases, the work of the office has a greater relevance. If to all this we add an increase in age and the professional career of the volunteers, in some cases the experiences of the volunteer scheme differ little from those of the usual co-operators except in conditions and status. This means that, yet again, the debate arises as to whether the volunteers are no more than cheap labour. It is complicated to trace the dividing line between one experience and another. What is important for the majority of the organizations in the experiences of the volunteer scheme is the direct relationship with the communities, and the being able to live and share things with them in an austere way. It depends

<sup>4</sup> This research can be found on <http://www.alboan.org/portal/documentos.asp?id=73>. It is also available in Alboan offices or via web (www.alboan.org)

more on the organizations and the volunteers themselves more than on the specific contents of the work done for this to come about.

## What happens when things are not as we had imagined.

Up to the moment we have mentioned what encourages and motivates the three parties involved to commit themselves to a volunteer experience. But for this experience to meet the expectations of growth and enrichment and for it to also to be a learning experience we need to overcome some problems and conflicts. In as much as possible we need to solve the problems in a suitable way for all the parties and thus we will have the experience we hope for.

The volunteer needs to know and be able to face up to difficulties in the best way possible plus the organizations involved need to know how to accompany the volunteer in this process.

Although the intensity of the personal experience is different according to whether it is a short term or long term project, in most of them we find the following difficulties:

- **Frustration Management** when we face up to the reality of the difficulty in introducing changes in the people, in institutions, in the community or in the country itself. Frustration because we cannot carry out the activities we would like to for reasons of security or out of respect for local customs or processes or frustration because we find it difficult to understand the underlying logic in a particular culture or the social processes which take place. As with all the difficulties we mention, sometimes it is just a question of the way we look at things. And, often, what seems awful at one moment in the experience, later on we come to see as a value of that culture or community. At all costs we need to be prepared to tolerate the different frustrations we have to face. A particularly important frustration for women volunteers is the different attitude to gender we find in many of these situations. We will develop this topic later on in the text. However, in the majority of cases it is quite normal to come across frustration of all types in our own society but we know that in our environment we understand the rules of play. On the other hand, in a volunteer scheme experience we have trouble recognizing and understanding the different rules. With the passage of time we can contextualize the different difficulties and give them the relevance or importance they really have; in this way, we can identify; (1) what is in our hands (2) Whatever we can influence indirectly (3) whatever there is that cannot yet be changed.
- **Necessary Flexibility.** Cultural and contextual differences can be seen clearly in volunteer experiences. We who come from a culture in which we consider we can plan and control everything and that we are masters of our own lives come up against serious difficulties in understanding the logic of other communities and cultures. These difficulties arise, above all, because we come up against situations in which basic services or the resources in daily use do not work with the agility, speed or, simply, they do not have the structure we are used to. On the other hand, there are cultural contexts where fate, chance, gods or goddesses, the weather etc play a sufficiently important role as to condition any plans to be carried out. And for us, with our fixed mentality, it is difficult to manage these different ways of working. Therefore we need to be open and flexible in our planning, in our concepts, in our vision of the Cosmos, in our manner of understanding and being open to a different system of logic. Neither can we control and plan everything, nor can we leave everything to providence.
- **The culture shock** <sup>5</sup>. It has been studied and proved that, throughout the experience, whether it is of short or of long duration, the volunteers go through different stages in relation to the new culture and context in which they find themselves. There is the first moment, "the honeymoon" or falling in love with our new culture and context in which everything seems attractive, interesting, novel, worthy of our written word and photographs yet this moment varies in

---

<sup>5</sup> The theme of intercultural problems is treated in more depth in : Título del Documento. Bilbao, ALBOAN, 2010, Documento; x





duration, and contrasts with another moment in which we go deeper into the true life situation there. It is at this moment we discover that what we had imagined to be true is not so and we feel let down; this is something which we see clearly through the negative aspects and the limitations of the context and the culture. After this step from the honeymoon to being let down, the volunteers acquire a greater balance with respect to the new culture and context;

- They come to value the positive aspects which they see and which could be a source of enrichment for them and they are able to reject the non-positive aspects. It is strange how the same thing happens when they return to their own culture. Sometimes the honeymoon which we mentioned earlier whether it is on leaving or on returning, “occurs” when the volunteer is dreaming of going and then, once arrived at the destination there comes a period of frustration. We would do well to recognize this swing and to try to lessen the impact, knowing beforehand that this is what is going to happen.

At the same time it is important to have a clear idea of what attracts and what does not attract us in each culture and, what we will remember from each culture i.e. what can enrich us from this intercultural experience. There is no “perfect culture”, they all have their limitations and their potential. We must try to live out the experience as a moment of cultural enrichment which can lead us to re-assess some of our cultural paradigms. This is not an easy task and requires such a long time that we can only hope to take the first few steps.

- **Spirituality and religiousness.** These two aspects are present and most relevant in the real life situations we are about to encounter. In many cases this relevance is not restricted to the personal domain but is also present in the public sphere. Whereas in our western culture we are used to compartmentalizing life, in other cultural traditions we may relate to, we see how there is a more holistic vision of life and reality in which spirituality and religious customs play an important role. As a consequence, we may find it difficult to understand this reality or even enter more fully into the life and real circumstances of these communities and the people we meet. On the other hand, there are times when, although sharing the same faith, the forms and practices of this faith are very different to ours and we frequently find it difficult to share this experience. On the whole, the experience of spirituality or the transcendence of each person is a key element which we must respect. Quite often we are asked to share in some of these rituals. This is a complex matter. We are asked to be open minded towards these different cosmic visions, spiritualities and religious rites yet at the same time we should be developing our own interiorisation and transcendency.
- **The sense of time.** Although the measurement of time may be objective, we have all experienced that there are some seconds which last more than others, hours longer than others, some weeks which seem like months and others which seem like days. Accordingly we have all experienced that time has something of the subjective because it depends on how we live it out. Throughout the volunteer experience we are going to experience how time goes by more slowly the first few days or months since we have less things to do. On the other hand, it passes more quickly once we have entered into daily dynamics. And, with time, we see that the months or years of experience have gone by without realizing. On the other hand, time, in many of the communities where we are sharing the experience, means only the present moment. There is no rush to look at the future. In many cases, this way of thinking causes tension and difficulties. In many communities, not being a slave to the watch is something we have to learn, but it is also a source of conflict, tension or frustration which we have to be able to manage.
- **Tasks to be carried out.** One clear way of visualizing beforehand the experience we are going to carry out is to see if we are capable of explaining to other people, the country, the contexts and the tasks we are going to carry out. From the outset, the tasks are the most specifically defined acts to describe. Given that until we actually reach our destination the only thing we know about the situation we are going to find are the general statistics, the task seems something easier to understand and communicate. Once we have embarked upon the experience until we have created interpersonal relationships and got to know the culture, the task is what gives meaning to our presence. But what happens quite frequently is that we are not aware that, on the one hand, there can be cultural differences in how to carry out,



understand or define the task, and on the other, there could be changes in the tasks put forward initially. These changes or different interpretations of the function the volunteer is to carry out may disorientate us as it is one of the sure things we thought we had and about which we could offer some information. Again, it would be a good thing to be open to the fact that tasks and functions could be understood differently, or that these could change for social or organizational reasons (even though this would not mean our having to carry out actions for which we are not prepared.)

- **The Relevance of the results.** In strict relation to what we have pointed out before, in most cases we have been educated in cause and effect and this is not so clear in other cultures.

In other places, the elements in play (Climate, means of transport, communications...) can play a most important role in the sequence of cause and effect.

On the other hand, the social processes and relations in which we are involved do not always follow the cause and effect theory. Yet, although we are aware of this, in our subconscious, the cause and effect theory plays an important role (if I do this then what I expect to happen will happen) which leads us to want to see specific clear results. In the case of short duration experiences, although we are aware of their complexity, we try to make our stay produce significant changes. These changes we can recognize in ourselves but we also want to see them in the real situation in which we have spent time. However, changes in social processes happen slowly and progressively over time. And, although the same thing happens in the social processes here, the fact that many people may have no previous experience or the fact that in this type of experience we are volunteers almost 24 hours a day, we have greater expectations to see changes in the context and to see the results of our action. Generally, we see this for ourselves in the time and effort we invest and this has nothing to do with the fact that some processes bring about more visible and speedier results.

- **The Process of accompaniment<sup>6</sup>.** Actions such as coaching, mentoring and other similar ideas are in vogue at the moment in many work places. Accompaniment has always been a well used methodology in various spiritualities; nevertheless many of those who come into the volunteer processes today have had no experiences of this kind. The nearest thing to this which they may have come across is psychological treatment. And accompaniment is not that. On the other hand, the rhythm and dynamics of work in which we are involved have made us aware there is never enough quality time to accompany someone. These are the principal difficulties which we find in the volunteer scheme accompaniment process: sometimes, we simply do not know how, at other times there is no quality time or a suitable moment for it. Accompaniment is a key factor in the volunteer process because it makes the putting into words of what is happening, the contrasting of what the volunteer is experiencing and how to interpret it easier and it helps us to have a clear orientation of the experience, the perceptions and cultural interpretations. In order to achieve this, the key is to create a relationship of trust between the person accompanying and the person accompanied, and an openness to listen to and share what may be said. This is definitely something we must work on. We have to create these spaces, this trust, so that in dark moments or moments of doubt the accompaniment can help and make the experience easier. Normally, the host organization provides someone to accompany the experience. We must make an effort with the person who is going to accompany us, but if it is clear that there is no chemistry between the two we will need to look for another person who can respond better to our needs. One of the two elements we should bear in mind at the time of choosing the accompanying person is his/her sex. The experience is not the same for a woman as for a man. We should also bear in mind that where the accompanying person comes from could be an element in favour of trust and mutual understanding. Either way it is better to have someone to accompany us and probably the activity itself determines the dynamics of accompaniment which each person needs. Usually those who accompany the volunteers base their accompaniment on previous experiences. However, each person is different and has different needs and so it is important that the volunteers express their situation to the person accompanying them. If we do not have this accompanying figure we could fall into the error of spending time just going over and over

<sup>6</sup> Señalar el documento en donde se desarrolla más ampliamente el tema.



again things which some times have no relevance whatsoever with what we are experiencing at this moment, or topics which we may have interpreted wrongly... all this leading us into conflict, causing frustration and difficulties which ought to be avoided.

- **Loneliness.** Times and spaces of solitude are necessary throughout the experience. These moments help us to become more aware of the experience, to enjoy it, to take a rest from action and relationships and, at the same time, we are able to cultivate our interior life. What happens is that, at times, we live these moments of solitude in a positive way but at other times it is a negative experience.

There are times when we look for solitude and other times when we find ourselves alone when we least want this. Either way, we need to be aware that these times of solitude will come. When it is a question of undesired solitude, we need to fall back on our resources and do something that we want to do. Another possibility is to learn how to enjoy these times of solitude calmly, knowing that other moments of intense relationships will soon come along. But we must not forget that there is a period of solitude which we need if we are to reflect on and understand the experience, if we are to understand what our needs are (what changes to make and what new demands there are). This is a time which is more difficult to find, but, at the same time, more and more necessary as we advance in the experience.

- **Communication between volunteers overseas and people back home.** At the start of the experience, we want to share all that we are going through in an intense way with those we have left in our place of origin. This coincides with the fact that we have more free time. Later, the time will come when we are fully taken up in the experience and we no longer have time to tell people back home what is happening. And as we haven't been in touch for some time, people are not going to follow some of the things we could tell them now. We would have to begin again from the start. However, it is important to communicate, both to the persons we spend the day with and to those who are afar, all the information about what we are doing, what we are experiencing and feeling so that they can accompany us in the "before", during and after the experience. Yet the most important thing is the volunteer's awareness and ability to express what he or she is going through. Communication with other people helps us to communicate with ourselves. In some cases, it is a good idea to keep a personal diary, nowadays these could be transformed into personal blogs, or the regular sending of a letter with news, group chats, periodical meetings etc. All these resources help us to communicate our experiences. As we have said before this is not only an important element for the volunteer himself but it is also important for those who are sharing the experience.
- **Spaces for leisure time.** Leisure time is a privileged time for personal fulfilment although it is a privilege that not everyone can enjoy. Nevertheless, we are accustomed to our free time and we have hobbies or special interests and concerns. This is one reason why during the volunteer experience, especially in the case of long term volunteer experiences, we should dedicate time to a leisure pursuit. It is good because it means a break from our daily routine and it may allow us to get to know other people with different interests, and it can help us to look at each day from a different perspective. It is true, however, that sometimes, in a particular context it is not easy to maintain contact or even to go to specific leisure zones. On the other hand, we could create our own leisure spaces. What is important is give oneself some free time.
- **Affective relationships.** These could fill us with joy or make us suffer intensely. And in the same way we could be a source of joy, suffering or frustration for other persons. But in any case, we need affective relationships. In the volunteer experience we could feel especially vulnerable as we miss our near ones and friends, people we've always been with. The temptation is to look for substitutes. This is fine, but, we must be aware that relationships are made up of two or more and we need to be aware of what the others are looking for in the relationship. At the same time, we must bear in mind the context and previous experience with respect to a relationship with volunteers. The cases vary since (1) there could be a tradition of dependent relationships with other volunteers, (2) there may have been experiences where the volunteer scheme has made it possible for a family to make good or, on the contrary, there



could have been people betrayed (3) It could happen that in, like manner, people abroad could receive the volunteer as a son or daughter and (4) they look to the volunteer to save them from their real situation.

Therefore, we need to be aware as far as possible of the interests and impact of these relationships. If we are fully aware of the situation then we can minimize or clarify what we don't want from the relationship. At the same time we must make the most of the friendship, new friendships which could be lasting. We should not feel bad because one day it will all be over but enjoy ourselves whilst we can.

- **Gender Differences.** We are aware that constructions of gender are cultural and, so, modifiable. In our context, the struggle in favour of equality has led to significant advances in the matter of equality between men and women although full equality has not yet been reached. In other places, the advances and setbacks in equality have taken place in different circumstances than ours. This has repercussions for both men and women. Generally, women experience changes more than men especially those which discriminate against females. The volunteer must be aware of the cultural codes which exist in the situation in which they are immersed. He or she must be capable of identifying these conceptions which limit the freedom and possibilities of women and, if there is a problem, to accompany both men and women to make the necessary changes in cultural patterns. We should not forget that we are all involved in this process, that it is a daily struggle and that no-one is outside the influence of his or her cultural context. Even so, a feeling of frustration is unavoidable because some changes could take place a lot more quickly.

## **“Marrying” imagination, expectations, and motivations to the specific situation both on the journey out and on return**

### **Advice for volunteers**

We have already mentioned some of the aspects which we must pay attention to throughout the experience. These aspects refer to personal changes, changes in those we work with and changes in the context.

All this should make us more aware of what is taking place and, at the same time, to develop attitudes and values which make it possible to adapt to change without losing one's identity or forgetting the purpose of our presence in that country.

We have to be aware that there will be changes in our motivations and in those of the Host organization and this is a good thing. In both cases we can see how these motivations mature. However, if these changes lead us to lose the essential, the primordial in our volunteer experience it could be that they are not so beneficial or, perhaps, quite simply, it is time to finalize the experience and begin another.

We need to consider the intensity with which as volunteers we live day to day and be aware that this same intensity is not felt by the people we work with. We should be relative about our presence there. We must be humble about our presence and capabilities.

Amongst the attitudes needed to face difficulties, or to face up to the changes we mentioned earlier, it is a good thing to work on skills and attitudes related to openness to change, management of loneliness and interpersonal relations, empathy and ridding ourselves of our prejudices and pre-conceived ideas.

At the same time, we should bear in mind that we will experience a certain solitude. Sometimes it will be a loneliness we don't want, but it exists and we must recur to our resources to carry out that task we don't like or learn how to get the most from our solitude knowing that other times will come of intense relationships. And there is a solitude we must cultivate, time needed to be able to examine and savour the experience and see what other needs, changes and new demands there are.

Finally we should understand the volunteer experience as another important life experience although a very special one. Most people are always looking for change and personal enrichment in response to interior disquiet brought on by new areas of knowledge or experiences acquired.

### **Advice for the organisations sending volunteers out**

The organisations sending volunteers out have a preponderant role in the prior to and posterior phase of the experience. They also have an accompanying role during the experience but distance means an added difficulty.

This is why we centre our attention on advice before and after the experience. Prior to the experience we must pay much attention to the volunteers but also to the preparation of the people responsible for their formation. In this sense, we must put the information programmes up-to-date and so provide adequate formation for the situations in which the volunteers will be admitted and the needs of each one.

A combination of group formation and a time apart of learning, contrasting and personal accompaniment of the volunteer are recommended. This same formation period should use the different tools needed to prepare the experience. However, we must clarify that formation has its limitations and we can never predict what the experience will really be like. Nevertheless, at least we know we can count on the various “tools” to help us organize the experience in a satisfactory manner.

At the moment, there are some kinds of volunteer experiences and new places which require, in a special way, an amplification of themes and tools to be acquired previously. These may be new geographical areas with which we have not had the traditional relationship of cooperation such as Africa or Asia or it could be a question of more specific work sectors such as those linked to participation processes and a decentralization of citizen power, management of natural resources, local development etc.

Another key element of the organization which sends out the volunteers is to know the profile and motivations of the participant well and, at the same time, knowing the profile wanted by the host organisation plus its expectations.

In like manner, it is important to count on a reference person; someone who will accompany the experience from formation, during the stay abroad and on return. If, on the volunteer's return, we can combine group work and the personalised accompaniment, we could respond in a better way to all the anxieties or concerns which arise in most cases. At the same time we could accompany the finalisation of the experience and open up new experiences for new volunteers.

In the specific case of ALBOAN, the evaluation of the experience by the volunteer, by the host organisation and the contrast between both is valued very positively. In the case of long term experiences these evaluations take place in the middle of the experience in order to be able to re-orientate those aspects which need it, and there is also a final evaluation.

These evaluations have made it possible to discover the processes of change undergone by the volunteer and they serve for accompaniment on the return from the experience.

### **Advice for the Host organisations**

The host organizations must clearly define both the tasks to be carried out by the volunteer and all aspects related to accommodation and board as these are of vital importance in the experience. On the other hand, a reference person must be named if this is not the person accompanying the experience. This person must be in charge of the welfare of the volunteer, see how the experience is going, make the first introductions, presentations and “translations” of the specific cultural dynamics.



At the same time, this person has to follow the development of the experience, identify difficulties and find solutions between the volunteer and the person responsible for the experience within the Host organization. And, finally, he or she has to make sure that the volunteer can count on accompaniment. The Host organization should be aware of the changes happening to all the "actors" involved in the experience. At the same time a specific task falls to the companions from their own organization- to clarify the contribution of the volunteer and what exactly is expected from both parties. In this sense we must work with the image each one has of the presence of an international volunteer in the organization and in the community. The Host organizations must facilitate permanent communications with the home organization to evaluate the development of the experience.

Both the home and the Host organizations must make sure the experience finishes and that the volunteer return to his place of origin. Then, in the place of origin, when we close up the volunteer experience, future alternatives beyond those of the volunteer system can be considered.



## ***By way of Conclusion***

### **The experience of the International volunteer scheme: Challenge and necessity**

As we mentioned at the beginning of the publication, for all the parties concerned, the experience of the volunteer scheme means the concretion of some of the aspects of the society we wish to support. It is an experience in which people are at the centre; those who go, those who accompany them and make the experience possible and those who meet up there. It is an experience in which the key factor is not the economy but solidarity. It is an experience of widening horizons for both parties in search of community growth and social justice. It is also an experience of putting into practice dialogue between cultures, religious confessions and different visions of the cosmos with the object of achieving commitment and participation in the construction of a world more just and respectful for everyone.

For all this, the volunteer scheme has been, is and will be decisive in organizations of solidarity and cooperation. It means a volunteer scheme where we try to find a meeting point between two organizations, societies and cultures which will work together, live side by side in a specific experience. It is a way to connect people, to communicate ideas and make people sensitive to the people, organizations and societies involved.

The experience of the volunteer scheme shows us how the action of one single person with the complicity and in the framework of various social organizations can have an important multiplying effect. This is the so-called “knock on effect” whereby one individual puts many more into action. And this is how change and social mobilisation should be produced.

Linked to the aforesaid, the volunteer experience helps the social organizations involved to carry out their objectives of creating sensitivity, social commitment and to complete their specific tasks. Consequently, the experiences of the volunteer scheme constitute one of the means to aid the organizations involved to achieve their goals.

Yet, the volunteer scheme experience for all its limitations, at the same time gives us “wings” to see clearly the impact of change and personal commitment and to experience humility. Above all, the fact that we are very few doesn’t matter because if we unite our forces with others we can make a difference. In a similar way, we see that we can fulfil our expectations only if we count on the expectations and motivations of others.



### **To put plans into practice**

And now we present, grouped together, different dynamics to be used to work on some of the aspects mentioned previously. In some cases it depends on how we can focus the dynamics to incorporate them into one publication or another, however, we believe the most important thing is to have them available and for the monitor to know how to use them. We have both individual and group dynamics in the following order.

- Dynamics of personal self-knowledge.
- Dynamics of knowledge of the real situation.
- Dynamics to deal in depth with the volunteer scheme, motivations, expectations.
- Communication dynamics.





## Dynamics of self-awareness

### REPORTER DYNAMICS.

**Type:** In groups

**Duration:** 40 minutes

**Objectives:** To present and obtain a general vision of the participants. To reflect on their own motivations and expectations and to share them with the group.

**Development** In pairs they introduce themselves. For ten minutes the pairs share key details about what they hope to gain from the volunteer experience. After this time each pair is asked one by one to introduce themselves to the group. In this way it is easier to go round the pairs and we stop thinking about our own experience and focus on the characteristics of the other person who is going to begin this “adventure” with us.

### GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

**Type:** In groups

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Objectives:** To achieve group integration and to share expectations concerning the experience of volunteer work.

**Development:** The co-ordinator hands out to each participant a folio on which he or she writes name and surnames and then pins this to their T shirt. At the same time we form groups according to the initial letter of the first surname. Once the groups have been formed, each person introduces himself or herself, telling the others where they were born, where they live, what their work consists of etc for the space of ten minutes. After this, they return to their own chairs and they are given a coloured cardboard card on which they must write what they most like in one word (work, listening to music, making friends etc). Gentle music is played and the participants are asked to walk around the room observing their companions, bearing in mind the word they had written on their cardboard card and had pinned to their T shirt. When the co-ordinator says so they have to form groups according to the word they had written. In these groups they introduce themselves, they share their expectations with respect to the experience of the volunteer work they are going to carry out, they elect a moderator for the group and “baptize” the group with a name. Then, in clearly identified organized groups they work on the topics to be discussed during the meeting.

**Recommendations:** to help create a sense of belonging, the members remain in the same group throughout the encounter. Each group should organize an activity for the closing session

### IDENTIFYING ONESELF WITH THE PLACE

**Type:** In groups

**Duration:** 40 minutes (according to the number of people in each group)

**Objectives:** The presentation of all involved and, at the same time, finding out their interests and values.

**Development:** The co-ordinator invites the participants to get to know their surroundings and to find something: a painting, a statue etc which draws their attention. They are given time in silence to go round and identify clearly what draws their attention. After this, each one introduces himself and tells the others why he or she has chosen that particular object, how he would explain this to people of other cultures and the others may ask more in depth questions.

After the presentation, the co-ordinator summarises the motivations of the group and asks for opinions.

### WHO AM I?

**Type:** individual (optional in groups)

**Duration:** 50 minutes

**Objectives:** Self awareness and interpersonal communication.

**Development:** Each person is given a reference statement and asked to agree or disagree with it and to say why. The statement is “Life is worth living but only for those who fight for it, those who know who they are, those who know who they want to be”. The participants are invited to reflect on this statement. They are given a folio where they write whether they agree or disagree with the statement and recall life experiences which coincide or contrast with the statement.



After making notes, they are asked to list, based on what they have written, and on what they know about themselves, their qualities and weaknesses in order to explain them to the volunteer accompanying them.

**Recommendations:** This could be a group exercise. In that case the participants share their findings with the group. On a whiteboard the name of each one in the group and a particular quality that person considers he has is written. The group may add something else which has been observed in a particular person's presentation or something from previous knowledge. Finally, the group members are asked to comment on how they have felt during this activity.

### **PRESENTATION WITH PHOTOGRAPHS.**

**Type:** In groups

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Objectives:** To make communication within the group easier.

**Development:** At the start, a series of photographs numbered in pencil are placed on the table. The participants are asked to look at the photographs and to choose the one which they feel most identified with. Once the photo has been chosen, the participants form small groups to comment on why that particular one was chosen, the next step is then to elect someone to present the results to the rest.

## **Dynamics to consider real life situations<sup>7</sup>**

---

### **POVERTY**

**Type:** individual (optional in groups).

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Objectives:** to obtain a more in-depth knowledge of the concept of poverty and consider how different types of poverty contribute to the development or lack of development in different people.

**Development:** Each individual is asked to read the text we reproduce here and then to put forward ideas for development issues to be used in their volunteer experience.

After this, we will open up a dialogue with the co-ordinator where the volunteer concerned is asked to evaluate what a volunteer experience can contribute specifically to development.

### **THE POOR**

The real poor are those who have no time to waste time.

The real poor are those who are never silent, those who can't buy silence.

They are those who have legs but have forgotten how to walk. Just like the hens' wings, they have forgotten how to fly.

They are those who eat rubbish and pay for it as if it were real food.

They are those who have the right to breathe in shit as if it were air.

They are those who only have freedom to choose between one television channel and another.

Those who experience passionate dramas with machines,

Those who, although they are amongst people, are always alone.

The poor, the truly poor, are those who do not know they are poor.

**Suggestions:** We have the possibility of holding group dynamics involving all the participants concerning what has come up in the smaller group meetings. Following this, each group presents its ideas or proposals. The other groups debate the viability of the proposal and a "winning" proposal or project is chosen. The activity may finish here or the participants could continue the debate adding further ideas.

### **2,600 MILLION PEOPLE LIVE ON LESS THAN 2\$ A DAY.**

**Type:** In groups

**Duration:** 50 minutes

**Objectives:** To make people aware of the problem of injustice and to reveal the causes of it.

---

<sup>7</sup>

Señalar cómo en las otras publicaciones tienen más dinámicas de este tipo.



**Development:** A poster is shown on which the sentence “2,600 million people live on less than 2\$ a day”.

The sentence is read out and emphasis is placed on the fact that, although we know the problem is great, we don't really feel anything. In small groups, the participants are asked to prepare a presentation to make people really aware of the seriousness of this poverty. The presentation may include slogans, campaigns to carry out in one's local area. After this, all these ideas are presented to the groups in general and then the different ways of making people aware of the problem are discussed. All the members are asked what they think and how they now feel about this dreadful situation.

**Recommendations:** The statement can be changed to include references to other topics: equality of sexes, environmental issues, health, International commerce etc.

## THE AEROPLANE GAME

**Type:** in groups

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Objectives:** An in-depth study of how we perceive inequality in the World.

**Development:** The text we present below is distributed amongst the participants who are then divided into small groups and once they have read the text they discuss their reactions and answer the five questions at the end of the text. They are asked to present their conclusions in a sketch or as a kind of theatre piece. Everyone has to participate.

### Robbery

Flying is a great experience. It's great and moving at the same time. Just imagine the places and unknown people who will meet up at the arrival point!

We can also imagine a flight which is a little different but also exciting. We are in an aeroplane with a capacity for a thousand passengers and is about to set off. An air steward informs us over the loudspeaker that the flight will last 24 hours (symbolising a year). You look round. We are not used to seeing so many people. We begin to consider statistics.

Of the thousand passengers, grouped according to continents, we find that 605 are Asian, 140 African, 113 European, 86 South American, 51 North American and 5 from Oceania.

And as for religion: 330 are Christian, 202 are Moslem, 119 say they belong to no particular religion, 133 are Hindu, 58 are Buddhist, 23 are atheist, 3 are Jewish and 132 belong to other religions..

Our attention is caught by the age of these passengers: 372 are less than 20 years old and 103 are over 60 years old. We ask them what their profession is: 184 work in agriculture, 162 in the service industry, 92 in industry and 30 are looking for work.

The Air steward distributes newspapers and asks the passengers which language they prefer. 165 speak Mandarin, 86 English, 83 Hindi, 64 Spanish, 58 Russian and 37 Arabic. Others speak, in descending order, Bengali, Portuguese, Indonesian, Japanese, German, French and 200 other languages. They will find it very difficult to understand each other.

We are in mid-flight. The way breakfast is served is very strange. 25 passengers are each offered three full courses. All these passengers are European or North American. On the other hand, 55 passengers take coffee and eat half a croissant. Twenty only have crumbs to put in their mouths.

It is now time to eat again. Surprisingly, the people who have lunch are the same ones who had breakfast before. They even obtain more food!

The question arises as to why there is not the same amount of food for everyone. Someone suggests putting part of the cost of the tickets towards solving the problems which arise. But the crew say that they have already spent 20 thousand Euros of the Money received. .Thousands of Euros have been used for the education of the young people on board, 800 in medical costs and 1,500 in weapons to use in avoiding confrontations.

Some of the passengers stand up because they can't believe this information .They rush towards the cabin to ask how this situation has come about. Who is responsible? Why are there so many differences? How can we allow people to die of hunger?



---

## Dynamics for an in-depth study of the themes: the volunteer programme, motivations, expectations

---

### A SURVEY OF MOTIVATIONS

**Types:** individual (optional in groups)

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Objectives:** To begin to explain our motivations clearly.

**Development:** The coordinator demonstrates how to feel motivated. Each time we begin a new project we should ask ourselves what it is about, what is our actual situation and what we hope to gain from it. After this introduction, each participant is asked to reply to the following questions: Why are you interested in becoming a volunteer? Do you feel animated? What do you hope to gain from this experience? What can you offer?

**Recommendations:** We can work on these questions individually or in groups and express our expectations and if we feel motivated or not.

By way of orientation we can prepare a presentation: We explain that motivations are those elements which make us efficient and keen to work as volunteers. Each life experience is made up of rational motivations and many subconscious motivations. Motivations may appear in the form of desires and it is important to distinguish these from real ideas. Motivations evolve. They serve as a driving force in times of crisis. These motivations affect my whole being not just my reasoning or my affectivity. To study these motivations helps us to keep them before us and to be aware of our possibilities and our limitations.

**Suggestions:** To consider these motivations looking at them before the experience and then after it.

### THE TIMESCALE OF OUR MOTIVATIONS

**Type:** individual (or in groups)

**Duration:** 40 minutes

**Objectives:** Each participant examines what exactly motivated him/her to undertake this volunteer experience.

**Development:** The participant draws a timeline on a piece of paper which reflects the four most important moments in the evolution of motivations concerning the volunteer scheme and international solidarity in general. On the timeline we ask the participants to highlight specific moments, people, places, experiences and motivations which could explain how this person has come to participate in a volunteer experience. Once this has been carried out, the participant shares with the coordinator the most significant motivations in his/her decision.

**Recommendations:** In groups or with the person at the side of each participant we can share what we have written on our timeline to identify the motivations we have in common.

### ITEMS AND CASES

**Type:** individual (or in groups)

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Objectives:** To reflect on the volunteer experience and how to face up to changes in our expectations, contexts or motivations.

**Development:** Different cases based on volunteers' real experiences are presented and the participants are asked to:

- Identify the areas where we could find or have found difficulties.
- To evaluate how much these difficulties could affect each individual in the same situation.
- What steps can be taken to clarify or change whatever could be a difficulty for the volunteer.

#### Case 1.

A volunteer has spent months preparing her departure for El Salvador. The day of departure arrives and at the airport she says goodbye to her family and friends. She assures them that she will call them as soon as she arrives in San Salvador and settles into the compensatory education centre run by "Fe y Alegría" where she is going to help out for the next two years. Whilst the aeroplane is in full flight, an earthquake affects El Salvador and, in particular, part of San Salvador. The aeroplane lands in San José in Costa Rica and, after a long wait, from there the passengers



are transferred to San Salvador. When she arrives, after more than a day's delay, she comes face to face with a country in ruins. After a few days they find a job for her to do. She has to drive a lorry to places she doesn't know distributing humanitarian aid..

### **Case 2.**

You have spent some months in a very interesting organisation but it does not come up to your expectations. You wanted to work with children but you find yourself in an organisation which works with communities set up to strengthen and organise themselves in order to resolve their particular needs and conflicts. Little by little you become integrated into the team although it has been difficult for you to change your perspectives. Now you are beginning to feel part of the group. After a short while, the communities and the organisations take up a standpoint against some decisions of the Government and they decide on a hunger strike. You want to take part in the hunger strike to show your solidarity and commitment to the communities and organisations which have received you but you are not allowed to take part. Both the organisation you are working with and the organisation which sent you there forbid you to participate.

### **Case 3:**

At last you are told where you are going to be sent. You are a journalist and you are going to work with a community radio station in a small town. You are going to go with a companion who has gone through the formation process with you. Everything begins to make sense. You both speak with volunteers who have been there previously and they are able to tell you about the good points and also the limitations of the situation. Despite the difficulties of the context, they all encourage you to go there and enjoy the experience. You set off on the journey and, since your companion went out a month before you, you know what to expect. You arrive at the main offices of the radio station where you are going to be based. They are in the capital of the country and from there the work of the other stations and various educational processes are coordinated. There is also a printing press. You get to know the people there and from your institution they want to offer you a change of destination. The problem is that where you were to be sent, two volunteers have already arrived and 4 volunteers are too many. You are offered the possibility of staying in the capital and supporting the radio station which transmits there.

**Recommendations:** After each individual has examined the situation, in groups, the different approaches and possible solutions can be debated.

## **DECALOGUES**

**Type:** In groups.

**Duration:** 40 minutes

**Objectives:** To make the participants aware of the values which a volunteer experience offers us and to take them their own.

**Development:** The coordinator puts forward reasons and motivations for the volunteer experience and all that this implies. Then, divided into small groups, the participants are asked to write ten sentences which encapsulate the values and potential of the volunteers, the organisation which sends them out and the host organisation. This written "Decalogue" is presented in the plenary session and other aspects if considered necessary can be added. After the session, the participants may share their opinions about things they had not considered at the time and point out the ideas which have most surprised them.

**Suggestions:** To continue with the activity, we may add another section "Why opt for a volunteer experience?" contained in this publication. Once everyone has read this section, they are all asked to complete the "Decalogues" anew and to reflect on things which they had not realized until now.

## **FRUSTRATIONS AND OVERCOMING THEM.**

**Type:** In groups

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Objectives:** To reflect on life experiences where the participant has suffered frustration and how he or she has overcome this.

**Development:** The coordinator asks the volunteers to think back on an experience in which they have felt frustration or impotence and to write this down. Then we ask him or her to write down how he or she would have acted in that situation. Once this is written down, the paper is folded in such a way that the situation is visible but not what the companion has written down. Again, a new



companion sees the situation but not what has been written about it and then passes the paper to a third person who then reads the two reactions and presents them to the group. The one who went through that particular experience can tell the others how he reacted at that moment.

After listening to all the possible reactions, we should be able to identify strategies which give us clues as to how to face up to frustrations in the future.

### **FEARS AND HOPES:**

**Type:** In groups

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Objectives:** Each one should express his feelings and worries as a means to expressing clearly the topics of most interest or those which cause most worry.

**Development:** The coordinator offers a short presentation concerning the hopes and fears of the volunteers. The participants are asked to write down their hopes and fears concerning their future volunteer experience (this could be something general or a specific idea). The co-ordinator asks each one to choose the two which most make an impact on them. In common, each person shares one of his fears and the co-ordinator writes this down on the whiteboard, resuming what has been expressed and saying if the person concerned was a man or woman. The co-ordinator explains that when everyone has finished their presentation, there will be time to highlight anything which has not been mentioned but could appear relevant. After this, the participants reflect on the predominant topics and if there are differences according to sex. The joint response is examined again and the participants choose the two topics which have most drawn their attention. After the evaluation, the two most voted for are highlighted and, in groups, the participants are asked to make a poster, mural or create a slogan which resumes the fear expressed and the different suggestions put forward to overcome it. Finally there is a plenary session to present the work carried out.

**Recommendations:** The participants may be given, either before or after the activity, a copy of the section of this publication "When not all is as we had expected". It would be a good idea to reflect on the gender differences seen in the activity.

### **LONELINESS**

**Type:** individual/ in groups

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Objectives:** To express openly the way we behave in times of loneliness and to identify resources we can use to face this problem in the most satisfactory way possible.

**Development:** The co-ordinator proposes that the individual or the group listens to the song "Soledad" (Loneliness) by Jorge Drexler and, as the song goes on, identifies: (1) moments in which loneliness "knocks" on the door and (2) strategies used to face this loneliness. This is a personal exercise to be written down. In the individual commentary these strategies can be compared and contrasted with the accompanying person. Individual steps can be drawn up for this situation. If this is a group activity, small groups can draw up their common strategies. In either case, "a prescription" or the "instructions for taking the medication" can be prepared from the common strategies to overcome loneliness.

**Suggestion:** The participants are provided with the words of the song for personal use.

Here are my credentials,  
I've been knocking at your door,  
for some time now.  
I think we will spend long periods of time together,  
I suggest that you and I get to know each other.  
Here I am,  
I bring you my scars,  
words on pentagram paper.  
Don't pay too much attention to what they say.  
You will find me,  
In all I have kept quiet.  
It's over.  
I have let the dream that  
life is painless cloud over me..  
How strange that it is you,

O loneliness who keep me company.  
Company for one who has never known,  
how to be alone. Jorge Drexler

## THE SILHOUETTE

**Type:** In groups

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Objectives:** A reflexion on the stereotypes which exist in the North and in the South concerning the volunteer system and the societies in the North and in the South.

**Development:** A roll of brown paper is given to each small group. It has to be long enough for someone from the group to lie on it and have his silhouette traced. Then, the silhouette has to be divided into two vertically. On one side of the silhouette, the participants are asked to write down the ideas and stereotypes they have of the volunteer system in the South and on the other side, those they have of the North. After this, there is an idea sharing session and the aspects which most stand out in each case are analyzed and we can see if there is a more or less common trend in what has been debated.

In the second part of the session, the participants are given the following text: <http://www.alboan.org/formacion/documentos.asp?id=12> challenges of the volunteer system from the point of view of the South ,(pages. 11 and 12) to work on this in groups, and to discuss the things which most surprise them, experiences they may have had previously or which they may have heard of and which confirm or not the stereotypes mentioned before.

### I volunteer scheme in the North (taken from)

We believe that this volunteer scheme could well respond to a dual need or challenge:

- The first challenge is to help "humanize North-South relations". These relations have been disfigured by a neoliberal, egoistic, materialistic system which imposes on Society a western cultural model, exclusive and inhuman, and which makes the economy more important than the person. The volunteer scheme based on interpersonal, intercultural and interracial relations would offer a "culture of peace", a culture of justice, equality and mutual solidarity. To humanize International relations is to attempt to change "the logics" of power (which mean things are controlled by "the person who knows the most", "the person who is at the top of the ladder") for a new concept where things are controlled by persons who "respect, dialogue, strip things down, recognize the others' point of view, know how to share ideas, to learn and to live in harmony with other people." This is particularly difficult when the other person feels excluded. To overcome the inequalities of the system by providing spaces of greater dialogue and equality may seem a utopia or artificial. But these experiences of the volunteer scheme shed light on reality and provide symbolic gestures relevant to both North and South. These experiences, if they take place during one's youth with an attitude of freedom and flexibility with regard to the system, mark one's character and may condition the volunteer system and all that concerns it both in the North and in the South.
- To respond to the second challenge we need to be efficient, both professionally and technically, to meet the specific needs which each development project demands in the countries or places which ask for the cooperation of a volunteer.

In an intercultural dialogue at working level, apart from professionalism, from the volunteer system in the North, we expect a broad, flexible and creative capacity of service along with a critical vision of the limitations in the services offered. We must avoid a paternalistic spirit, the creation of dependence or a transferral of culture, yet, at the same time we must respect processes underway and the reality of each situation. At a later moment, the volunteers of the North may become strategic allies of the institutions of the South in a social and technological North-South exchange.

In this field of technical service what is needed is the capacity to work as a group, adaptability to other cultural ways of working, to the use of time, communication, discipline, transparency and evaluation of both professional and personal actions and all this is far from easy. The importance of outside intervention is exaggerated and what is really needed is the development of each area's own intervention.



The volunteer scheme should assume the need for solidarity in groups without resources or technology and with these groups search for solutions which do not lead to depending on outside help. Another problem is the eagerness to justify external help, exaggerating the difficulties in each project instead of searching for solutions to the difficult changes to be expected in situations which depend on the global context and which we attempt to deal with in our “pequeños espacios”. In these two challenges, the volunteer system in the North may offer a “a social mystique” and an intercultural dialogue where the support offered in both groups may be evaluated in a horizontal exchange. We must attempt to become not only members of a project with a work contract but also colleagues in a greater personal or society project. It is advisable to avoid assuming “main character roles or leadership posts” which do not help the development of the local people. We must be patient with the time these processes take to adapt ourselves slowly, handling differences, processes, avoiding partisanship and, more than anything, serving as elements of dialogue and agreement.

### **STREETWISE EXPRESSIONS**

**Type:** In groups

**Duration:** 40 minutes

**Objectives:** To facilitate discussion concerning our limited vision of the volunteer system, the real situation in the South, etc. with the aim of making everyone understand that this system involves feelings, forms of expression and relationships.

**Development:** Small groups are formed and they are asked to prepare posters with expressions related to the volunteer system and/or the reality of the South (depending on what they have read in public places.) The posters are put up and the different topics which appear are analyzed in depth to establish what things are prejudices, stereotypes or generalizations and how we could change these expressions.

### **THE MAN AND THE FISH**

**Type:** In groups

**Duration:** 60 minutes

**Objectives:** To reflect on the dimensions of the volunteer system and its role in the construction of more democratic societies.

**Development:** The group is given a story which we reproduce here concerning the volunteer system. After reading the text, the participants are asked to apply to the entity they belong to as volunteers, the different dimensions of the social volunteer system, how each one puts these into practice, whether all the dimensions are important or if we can eliminate one or two of them. At the same time they are asked to think about the possibilities of democratic action, political demands and how to transform the social context in which they move. Could we have expressed other things in this story? If the people present have no previous experience of the volunteer system, they are asked to imagine how they would put forward proposals.

#### **«The man with the fish»**

The story we are about to relate is very well known. A certain man was found one night alongside the river of a big city and he was practically dying of hunger. The woman who ended up speaking to him also ended up promising to give him- every morning – one of the fishes which her husband used to bring home at the end of each working day. With that unexpected and sudden provision of fish the riverside man was able to stave off his terrific hunger. The woman’s husband, little by little began to reproach her attitude that day after day she offered generously those fish to the hungry man. The situation couldn’t be remedied, the riverside man needed to eat, at least, something with certain regularity but his situation depended on the woman’s appearance every day. It was vital to do something else. Then, it occurred to the woman an idea which would give the man certain self-sufficiency; she could teach him how to fish. She taught him how to use the rod and even how to make one with which he could obtain food himself. The story usually finishes here. We have all applauded the first acts of generosity, the spontaneity of the woman’s gesture and now we appreciate her decision to provide the means and formation necessary for that hungry man who before could not or didn’t know how to fish.

*But the story continued:* the quality newspapers of that riverside city couldn’t imagine for a moment that the man would never use his rod. The rivers were polluted by industry and there were very few





fish left in those waters. At the same time it was obligatory to obtain a permit to fish and the hungry man didn't have any money to pay the subscriptions. Yes, he did catch a few fish, illegally of course, at the risk of being caught, detained and imprisoned or fined. (Of course he wouldn't have been able to pay a deposit to the judge) With his useless rod and his continued hunger the riverside man ended up being expelled from the riverside by the landowners and officials of the big city.

### **CLASSIC DYNAMICS OF LIBERATION**

**Type:** in groups

**Duration:** 40 minutes

**Objectives:** To get to know different ways of working in groups.

**Development:** The coordinator offers a presentation of the different types of group dynamics centred exclusively on the group present. It does not involve a concern for Society in general or gives excessive importance to the psychological.

- **Liberating:** This is centred on the needs of the situation of the town or village concerned. Dynamics are used to help people grow, but at the same time, they may solve problems and show the value of analysis and a transformation of the real situation.

Continuing our work, we will make use of a particular form of dynamics to show the differences between the various dynamics available. This activity is called, "Pass it on". The activity consists of taking a ring and passing it round to all the participants. A match is given to each person. The group members are asked to put the match in their mouth and the ring has to go from match to match until it reaches its place of origin or the participants are asked to write their name on a piece of paper and debate whether this form of dynamics could be included in the classic type of dynamics or in "liberating dynamics". The next step is to put together all the responses and then to evaluate whether the group in general shares the same opinion or not, according to the arguments. Finally, they are all asked to think how they would change this activity to make it a form of "liberating dynamics".

## **Communication Dynamics**

---

### **WHAT WOULD YOU TALK ABOUT**

**Type:** in groups or individual

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Objectives:** To measure the depth of an informal conversation. To distinguish the conversations which reach the depth of the interior of a person from those which can be shared with any known person.

**Development:** Small groups of three or four persons speak informally about topics which interest them for ten minutes. After these ten minutes, each group is given 5 minutes to draw up a list of the topics they have discussed. For example, family life, celebrations, what makes for a good friendship, Films seen recently, sex etc. Then, the information is pooled and an attempt made to identify topics which we can talk freely about even with strangers. We try to identify as a group which topics we would most probably talk about only with close friends. We can even point out topics we would never talk about with anybody. We should ask ourselves if there is a difference in this respect between sexes or in different cultural contexts.

**Recommendations:** At the end, a copy of the annexe "When not everything goes according to plan" can be given to each participant and then they are asked to reflect on which forms of Communications with others are the most adequate for all involved throughout the International volunteer experience.

### **PERSON, WORD, PLACE**

**Type:** In groups/ individual

**Duration:** 50 minutes



**Objectives:** To provide an opportunity for easy Communications and to get to know the ideology and the values of the group..

**Development:** Each participant is asked to choose a person, a word and a place which mean a lot to him or her. After this, in pairs they exchange information about what they have chosen and why. The next step is to ask all the participants to attempt to agree on one sole word, person and place. Now the dynamics take place with groups of 6 persons attempting to reach an agreement on the choice of one person, one place and one word. Finally, there is a pooling of information where each group of 6 tells the others what they have chosen and why whilst the coordinator takes note of the most significant values. At the end there will be a pooling together of the values of all the persons and places which hold some significance for each participant. We will reflect on whether these choices are the same for men and women or in different cultural contexts.

### **WORKSHOP OF GROUP COMMUNICATION**

**Type:** individual (optional in groups)

**Duration:** 40 minutes

**Objectives:** To analyze the communication within the group and the attitude of the group towards working in groups.

**Development:** Each individual is asked to reflect on the following questions. After this, they are asked to comment on them with their accompanying person in order to share their reflexions on their attitudes in relation to other people.

Questions.

When I enter for the first time into a new group, how do I feel? When the group begins to work, how do I act? When other people meet me for the first time how do I feel they react? When I am alone in another group, do I feel o.k.? When people keep silence, how do I react? And, when someone speaks a lot? In the group, What fears do I have? When someone attacks me, how do I react? I feel wounded most easily when..... those persons who know me well think I am... I feel alone in a group when...I trust in those persons ...My greatest personal strength is... What am I like? I am sad when ... I feel anxious when...

**Recommendations:** This form of dynamics can serve for a pooling of common responses in groups.