



# One-day evaluation for GS volunteers

**Target Audience:**

Volunteers who have recently returned from their placements in the Global South.

**Total Duration:**

8 hours (plus lunch and breaks)

**Overall Goal:**

To provide a structured and supportive space for volunteers to process their experience, articulate their learning, manage the challenges of reintegration, and plan for their future.



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# Training Schedule Overview

Time	Duration	Session title	Key activities
9:00 - 10:00	60 min	Welcome Back & Reconnection	Arrival & Check-in, Human Spectrogram (Revisited)
10:00 - 10:15	15 min	Coffee Break	/
10:15 - 12:30	135 min	Session 1: Mapping the Experience	The Story Mountain: Charting Highs, Lows, and Learning
12:30 - 13:30	60 min	Lunch Break	/
13:30 - 15:00	90 min	Session 2: The Challenge of Being Home	Reverse Culture Shock Skits, The "Two Worlds" Diagram
15:00 - 15:15	15 min	Coffee Break	/
15:15 - 16:45	90 min	Session 3: Integrating the Experience	Responsible Storytelling, Skills & Future Mapping
16:45 - 17:00	15 min	Closing: Passing on the Wisdom	Letter to a Future Volunteer, Final Reflections & Feedback



## Welcome Back & Reconnection (9:00 - 10:00)

### Objectives:

To welcome volunteers back, re-establish a sense of community and trust, and take a "snapshot" of the group's current state.

### Materials:

An open space.

## Activity 1: Arrival & Check-in

### Procedure:

**Time:** 15 min

- Warmly welcome the group back. Acknowledge that returning can be a strange and complex experience.
- In a circle, conduct a simple check-in. Ask each person to share:
  - Their name.
  - One word that describes their overall volunteer experience.
  - One word that describes how they are feeling right now.

### Trainer's Notes:

This is a gentle way to begin. Listen carefully to the words they use for how they are feeling now; it will give you a good sense of the group's energy (e.g., tired, confused, energized, disconnected).

## Activity 2: Human Spectrogram (Revisited)

### Procedure:

- Remind the group of the Human Spectrogram activity from their pre-departure training. Explain that you will repeat it with new statements to see where they stand now.
- Designate an imaginary line across the room, with one end as "Strongly Agree" and the other as "Strongly Disagree."
- Read out post-return statements. After each one, ask a few people from different points on the line to briefly explain their position.
- Sample Post-Return Statements:
  - "My volunteer experience was exactly what I expected it to be."
  - "I feel like I have changed significantly as a person."
  - "It has been easy to adjust to being back home."
  - "My friends and family understand what my experience was like."
  - "I feel that I made a tangible, positive impact in the community."

### Trainer's Notes:

This activity is powerful because it creates a direct comparison with their pre-departure mindset. The contrast in their positions on the line will make their personal changes visible and create a strong foundation for discussion.

## Session 1: Mapping the Experience (10:15 - 12:30)



### Objectives:

To provide a structured method for volunteers to reflect on the entire arc of their placement, helping them organize complex memories and identify key moments of learning.

### Materials:

Large sheets of paper (A3), colored pens/markers for each participant..

## Activity: The Story Mountain

### Procedure:

- Introduction:

Explain the concept of a "Story Mountain" (or Hero's Journey) as a way to map an experience. Draw a simple mountain shape on the board with key points: 1. The Ascent (initial excitement, challenges), 2. The Peak (a key positive moment or success), 3. The Descent (new challenges, difficult moments, a "low point"), and 4. The Treasure (the key learning or insight brought back).

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**Time:** 10 min

- Individual Mapping:

Give each volunteer a large sheet of paper and markers. Ask them to draw their own Story Mountain, plotting key events, feelings, and people along the path of their journey. This is a quiet, reflective activity.

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**Time:** 30 min

- Small Group Sharing:

Divide the participants into small groups of 3-4. In these trusted groups, each person shares their mountain and tells the story of their journey. This is the core of the processing.

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**Time:** 45 min

- Group Debrief:

Bring everyone back to the large circle. Ask for general themes, not personal stories. "What were some common 'peaks' for people?" "What about the 'low points' or challenges—were there similarities?" "What kinds of 'treasures' or lessons did people bring back?"

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**Time:** 15 min

## Session 2: The Challenge of Being Home (13:30 - 15:00)



### Objectives:

To name and normalize the experience of reverse culture shock and the difficulty of communicating a transformative experience to others.

### Materials:

Flip chart paper, markers.

## Activity 1: Reverse Culture Shock Skits

### Procedure:

- In small groups, ask participants to brainstorm common or frustrating conversations they have had since returning home.
- Each group prepares a very short (1-2 minute) skit of one of these situations. Examples:
  - A friend asking a simplistic or stereotypical question ("So, did you save Africa?").
  - Feeling overwhelmed by consumer choice in a supermarket.
  - Trying to explain a deeply meaningful moment to someone who is distracted or uninterested.
- Each group performs their skit.

**Time:** 45 min

### Trainer's Notes:

Laughter is a powerful tool. This activity uses humor to create a strong sense of solidarity. It validates their frustrations and helps them realize they are not alone in these experiences. After the skits, debrief by asking, "Why are these conversations so difficult?"

## Activity 1: Reverse Culture Shock Skits

### Procedure:

- Ask each participant to draw two large, overlapping circles (a Venn diagram) on a sheet of paper.
- Label one circle "My World Back Home" and the other "My World During Volunteering."

**Time:** 45 min

- In the separate parts of the circles, they should write words or draw symbols that represent the unique aspects of that world (e.g., "fast-paced," "individualistic" in one; "community-focused," "slower rhythm" in the other).
- In the overlapping section, they should write what connects the two worlds—the parts of themselves or their lives that feel consistent across both.
- Debrief by asking volunteers to share one key thing from each part of their diagram. This helps them articulate the feeling of being "split" between two worlds and begin to think about how to integrate them.



## Session 3: Integrating the Experience (15:15 - 16:45)

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### Objectives:

To equip volunteers with strategies for sharing their stories responsibly and to help them identify the valuable skills they have gained for their future.

### Materials:

Paper and pens.

## Activity 1: Responsible Storytelling

### Procedure:

- Facilitate a discussion on the ethics of storytelling. Contrast a "pity-based" story (focusing on poverty, helplessness) with a "solidarity-based" story (focusing on people's strengths, relationships, and shared humanity).
- Introduce a simple framework for sharing: "Instead of telling everything, choose three photos or three moments that tell a story about: 1. A Person (highlighting a specific individual and your relationship), 2. A Challenge (showing complexity and your own learning), and 3. A Connection (a moment of shared joy or understanding)."
- In pairs, have them practice telling their story using this framework

Time: 45 min

## Breaking Down the Three-Story Framework

Explain each of the three pillars in detail, clarifying the purpose of each one. You can use a whiteboard to list the three points.

### Pillar 1:

#### A Person - The Story of a Relationship

- Your Instructions to the Volunteers: "Instead of talking about 'the community' or 'the kids' in general terms, your first story should be about **one specific individual** you built a relationship with. Choose a photo or a memory of this person. When you tell this story, be sure to use their name. What was a specific moment you shared? What did you do together? What did you learn from them?"
- Support Info for the Trainer: The purpose of this pillar is to **fight generalization**. It immediately establishes that the experience was about real relationships with complex individuals who have names, personalities, and their own lives. It shifts the narrative from "I went to help them" to "We shared this experience together," which is a more ethical and accurate representation.

### Pillar 2:

#### A Challenge - The Story of Your Learning

- Your Instructions to the Volunteers: "Your second story should be about a **challenge, a mistake, or a moment of confusion**. This is not about complaining or being negative. It's about being honest and showing your own learning process. What was a time you felt out of your depth? What was a mistake you made? What cultural misunderstanding occurred? Most importantly, what did you learn about yourself or the local context from that difficult moment?"
- Support Info for the Trainer: This pillar is designed to **promote humility and authenticity**. It counters the tendency to present a perfect, heroic "volunteer success story." It shows the audience that the volunteer was a learner, not a savior, and that development and cross-cultural work are incredibly complex. This makes the volunteer more relatable and their story more believable.

### Pillar 3:

#### A Connection - The Story of Shared Humanity

- Your Instructions to the Volunteers: "Your final story should be about a simple, **shared human moment**. This shouldn't be a grand achievement. Think of a small moment of connection: sharing a laugh over a spilled drink, playing a game with children, sitting in comfortable silence with a colleague, enjoying a meal together. It's a moment that transcends cultural differences and highlights what you have in common."
- Support Info for the Trainer: This pillar is the antidote to **pity-based storytelling**. It moves the narrative away from hardship and need, and towards mutual joy, respect, and understanding. It is often the most powerful part of the story because it allows the audience to connect on an emotional level and see the people in the host community as peers, not as objects of charity.

### Your Instructions to the Volunteers:

- "Now, take 10 minutes for some quiet, individual reflection. On your own, think about your entire experience and choose your three stories: The Person, The Challenge, and The Connection. You don't need the actual photos right now, just the memories. Jot down a few notes for each."
- "Next, find a partner. One of you will be the 'Storyteller' and the other will be the 'Listener'."
- "The Storyteller has 5 minutes to share their experience using *only* these three stories. Try to link them together."
- "The Listener's job is crucial. Your role is not to interrupt or ask questions. Your only job is to listen deeply. After the 5 minutes are up, the Listener will give feedback by completing these two sentences:
  - 'From your story, what I really understood about your experience was...'
  - 'The moment that will stick with me most is...'"
- "After the feedback, you will switch roles. The other person will have 5 minutes to be the Storyteller."

## Activity 2: Skills & Future Mapping

### Procedure:

- Ask each volunteer to individually list 3-5 concrete, transferable skills they developed or strengthened during their placement (e.g., cross-cultural communication, problem-solving, adaptability, budgeting, crisis management, language skills).
- Next to each skill, they should brainstorm where this skill is valuable in their life going forward (e.g., on their CV, in future job interviews, in their studies, in personal relationships).

**Time:** 45 min

### Trainer's Notes:

This activity is empowering. It helps them reframe the experience not just as a "nice thing they did," but as a significant source of professional and personal development.



## Closing: Passing on the Wisdom (16:45 - 17:00)

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### Objectives:

To provide a meaningful way for volunteers to synthesize their key advice and to formally close the workshop.

### Materials:

Note cards or paper, pens, an envelope.

## Activity: Letter to a Future Volunteer

### Procedure:

- Give each participant a note card. Ask them: "If you could give one piece of advice to someone who is about to go on this same journey, what would it be?"
- Have them write this piece of advice down anonymously on the card.
- Collect the cards in an envelope. Explain that these messages will be shared with the next group of volunteers during their pre-departure training. This creates a powerful cycle of learning and peer support.
- Final Circle: Go around the circle for a final one-word check-out on how they are feeling. Thank them for their courage and reflection, both during their time away and today. Finally, ask for their formal (e.g., written) feedback on the entire volunteer program to help the organization improve.