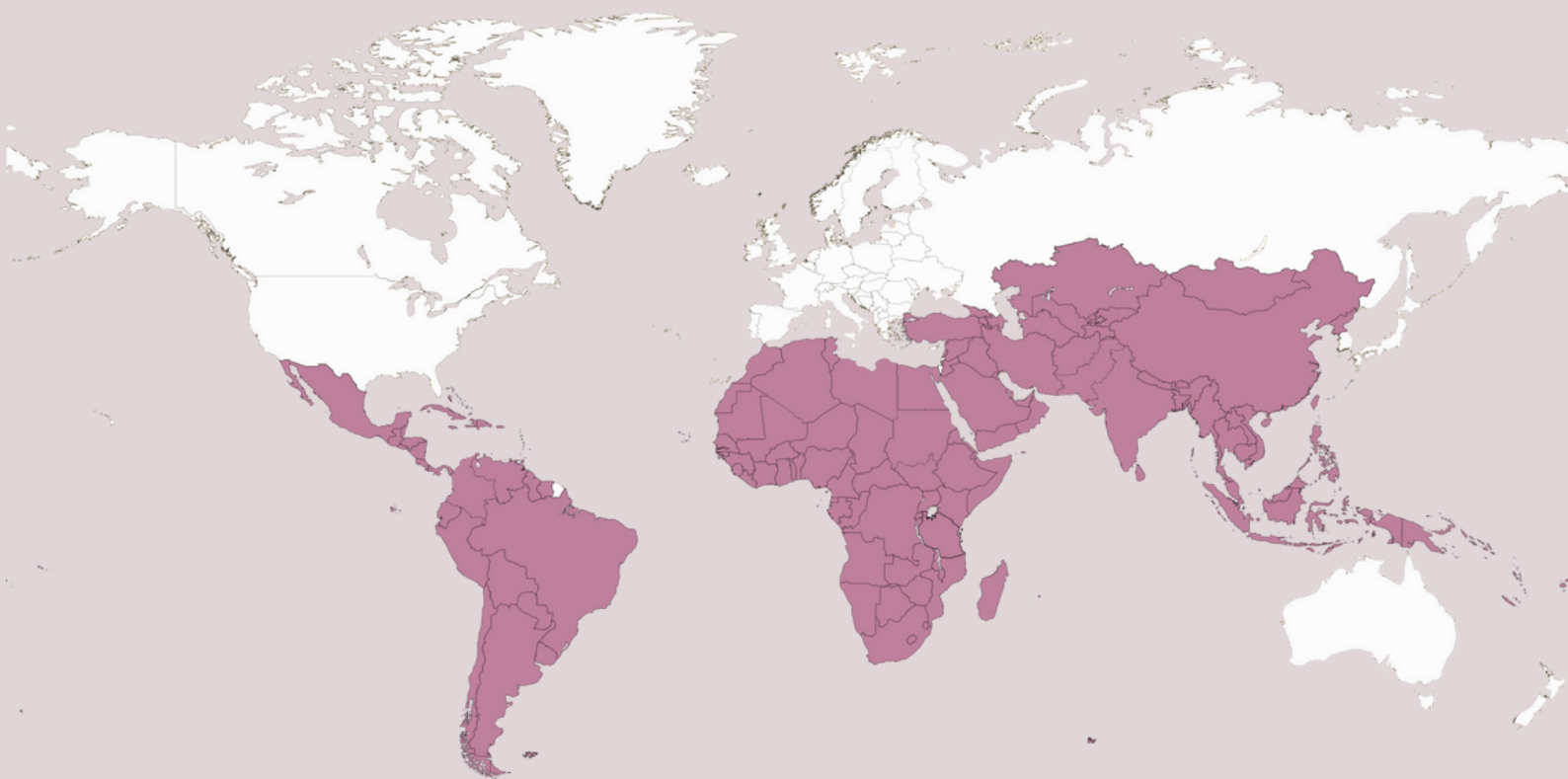




Pre-Departure Training Manual for GS volunteers

Target Audience:

Volunteers preparing for short to long-term placements in the Global South.

Total Duration:

8 hours (plus lunch and breaks).

Overall Goal:

To equip volunteers with the foundational awareness, skills, and critical perspectives necessary for a responsible, respectful, and impactful volunteering experience.

Training Schedule Overview

Time	Duration	Session title	Key activities
9:00 - 9:05	5 min	Welcome & Introduction	Setting the tone, agenda overview
9:05 - 9:20	15 min	Name Game: Getting Acquainted	Name & Motion Game
9:20 - 9:40	20 min	Get to Know Each Other: Who is in the Room?	Human Spectrogram
9:40 - 10:45	65 min	Session 1: The Journey to This Point	The River of Life: Motivations, Expectations, and Fears
10:45 - 11:00	15 min	Coffee Break	/
11:00 - 12:30	90 min	Session 2: Understanding Culture & Challenging Stereotypes	Cultural Artefacts, Stereotype Gallery Walk
12:30 - 13:30	60 min	Lunch break	/
13:30 - 15:00	90 min	Session 3: Power, Privilege, and Partnership	The Power Walk, Development Dilemmas
15:00 - 15:15	15 min	Coffee break	/
15:15 - 16:45	90 min	Session 4: Practical Skills for the Field	Blind Drawing (Communication), Forum Theatre (Conflict)
16:45 - 17:00	15 min	Closing: A Message to Your Future Self	Postcards to Myself & Final Reflections



Welcome & Introduction (9:00 - 9:05)

Objectives:

To welcome participants and outline the plan for the day.

Procedure:

- Warmly welcome the participants. Introduce yourself and any co-facilitators.
- Briefly go over the schedule for the day, explaining the flow and objectives of each session.
- Cover any housekeeping points (e.g., location of restrooms, break times).
- Set a positive and participatory tone, emphasizing that this is a space for open and honest discussion.

Name Game: Getting Acquainted (9:05 - 9:20)



Objectives:

To learn the names of all participants in an interactive and memorable way.

Time: 15 min

Materials: None.

Procedure:

- Have the group stand in a circle.
- Explain that you will go around the circle, and each person will introduce themselves by saying their name and making a simple physical gesture or motion that represents something about them (e.g., a hobby, a personality trait, or just a fun movement).
- You, the trainer, start. Say your name clearly while doing your motion.
- The person to your left then says their name and does their motion.
- After they do, the entire group repeats their name and motion together.
- Continue this around the whole circle, with the group repeating each person's name and motion after they introduce themselves.



Get to Know Each Other: Who is in the Room? (9:20 - 9:40)

Time: 20 min

Materials: An open space where people can stand in a line.

Objectives:

To help participants learn more about each other's backgrounds and expectations.

To create a visual representation of the group's diversity and commonalities.

Trainer's Notes:

This activity is excellent for quickly gauging the group's experience level and mindset. It gets people thinking about key themes and seeing that there is a diversity of opinions and feelings in the room.

Procedure:

- Explain that you will create an imaginary line or "spectrogram" across the room. One end of the room represents "Strongly Agree / A Lot" and the other end represents "Strongly Disagree / Not at All." The middle represents a neutral or "Not Sure" position.
- Read out a series of statements and ask participants to place themselves on the line according to their response. After each statement, briefly ask people at different points on the line to explain why they are standing there.
- Sample Statements: "I feel very prepared for my trip." "I am worried about culture shock." "I have travelled outside of my home continent before." "I am comfortable trying new and unfamiliar foods." "I consider myself an extrovert who gets energy from being with people." "I am good at asking for help when I need it." "I prefer to have a detailed plan rather than being spontaneous." "I expect to have regular and reliable internet access during my trip." "I am comfortable with periods of silence in a conversation." "I believe the impact of my volunteer work will be immediately visible." "I am looking forward to disconnecting from news and social media from back home." "I feel my family and friends fully understand my motivation for volunteering." "I work better in a structured environment with clear tasks."



Session 1: The Journey to This Point (9:40 - 10:45)



Time: 1 hour

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

Objectives:

For volunteers to deeply reflect on their personal journey, motivations, expectations, and fears related to the volunteering experience.

Activity 1.1 : The River of Life

Procedure:

- **Introduction (5 min):** Explain that our lives are like rivers, with twists, turns, calm spots, and rapids. This activity is a chance to map that journey.
- **Drawing the Past (15 min):** Ask participants to draw a line representing their life's journey up to this point. They should mark key events, choices, and experiences that led them to the decision to volunteer. They can use symbols to represent high points (sun) and challenges (rocks).
- **Drawing the Future (10 min):** Now, ask them to extend the river into the future, representing their upcoming volunteer placement. They should draw or write their hopes (e.g., a waterfall of new experiences), expectations (e.g., a bridge connecting them to the community), and fears (e.g., foggy areas, rapids).
- **Paired Sharing (20 min):** In pairs, participants take turns explaining their "River of Life" to their partner. This allows for deeper sharing in a more intimate setting.
- **Group Debrief (10 min):** Bring the group back together. Ask for general themes that emerged. What were common hopes? Common fears? This avoids putting individuals on the spot but gathers the group's collective mindset.

Session 2: Understanding Culture & Challenging Stereotypes (11:00 - 12:30)



Objectives: To illustrate how we interpret the unknown based on our own cultural lens, and to critically examine the origin and impact of stereotypes.

Materials: Several opaque bags containing a few strange "cultural artefacts" (e.g., a garlic press, a tea infuser, a specific knot, a chess piece), large flip chart paper, markers.

The best artefacts are those with a very specific, practical function that is not obvious from their form. You can use your things from home or office and also ask your colleagues for some interesting items.

But to help you a bit with the ideas you can use:

- **Kitchen Gadgets:** Garlic press, avocado slicer, olive pitter, melon baller, strawberry huller, egg slicer, lemon zester, a corkscrew with arms, a tea infuser ball.
- **Hobby/Craft/Music Tools:** A guitar capo, a tuning fork, a specific type of fishing lure, a bobbin from a sewing machine, a knitting stitch holder, a calligraphy nib.
- **Obsolete Technology:** A roll of 35mm camera film, a Palm Pilot stylus, a MiniDisc, a SIM card ejector tool, a keycap puller for a mechanical keyboard.
- **Hardware/Household Items:** A drywall anchor, a car tire valve cap, a wire nut for electrical wiring, a furniture leg floor protector, a key for winding an old clock.
- **Personal Items:** An eyelash curler, a tongue scraper, a metal nail file, a collar stay for a dress shirt.
- **Game Pieces:** A D20 (20-sided die) from Dungeons & Dragons, a Mahjong tile, a single Go stone.

Activity 2.1: Cultural Artefacts

Procedure:

- Divide the group into smaller teams. Give each team a bag with 3-4 "artefacts."
- Their task is to imagine they are anthropologists who have discovered these items from an unknown culture. They must deduce the values, rituals, and daily life of this culture based only on the objects.
- Each team presents their "findings" about their discovered culture.
- **Debrief:** After all presentations, reveal what the objects actually are. Lead a discussion on how we "fill in the blanks" with our own assumptions when faced with the unknown. How might this apply when we encounter new customs or behaviors in our host country?

If you need a more detailed debriefing guide:

Phase 1:

The "What?"

(Focusing on the Immediate Experience - 5 min)

This phase is about validating feelings and examining the group process.

- "When I revealed the true purpose of the objects, what was your immediate feeling or thought? Let's just hear a few words." (Listen for: surprised, silly, embarrassed, amused, 'that's so obvious now!').
- "Let's go back to your process. In your small groups, how did you actually create the story? Did one person have an idea that everyone latched onto? Was it a debate? Was it difficult?"
- "What roles did people play? Did you have a leader, a story-teller, a skeptic?"

Phase 2:

The "So What?"

(Analyzing the Experience and Drawing Insights - 10 min)

This phase is about connecting the activity to broader concepts of culture and perception.

- **Key Insight to Uncover:** We project our own reality onto the unknown.
 - **Question:** "Think about the stories you invented. Where did those ideas really come from? Were they truly from a new culture, or were they from movies, books, history, or experiences from your own culture?"
 - **Question:** "Let's look at the themes of your stories. How many were about complex rituals, magic, status, or conflict? How many were about simple, daily tasks like cooking or fixing things? What does that tell us about our tendency to 'exoticize' things we don't understand?"
- **Key Insight to Uncover:** The critical difference between Observation and Interpretation.
 - **Activity:** "Let's practice this. Take one of your objects. What is a pure, indisputable observation about it?" (e.g., "It is made of metal. It has two handles that pivot. It has a grid of small holes."). Write these on the board under "OBSERVATION."
 - **Activity:** "Now, what was your interpretation of it?" (e.g., "It is a ceremonial object used to mark a warrior's status."). Write these on the board under "INTERPRETATION."
 - **Question:** "Look at the two lists. What is the danger of living in the 'Interpretation' column when you are in a new cultural context?"

Phase 3:

The "Now What?"

(Applying the Learning to the Volunteer Placement - 10 min)

This phase is about building practical skills and a new mindset for the future.

- **Key Insight to Uncover:** The need for a new mindset: "Curiosity over Certainty."
 - **Question:** "Let's make this real. You will arrive at your placement and you will see things you don't understand. For example, you see a shopkeeper sprinkle water on the doorstep every morning. What is your immediate, internal 'artefact story' about that action?"
 - **Question:** "What is the potential harm—to your relationships, to your work, to your own learning—if you believe that first story is the absolute truth?"
 - **Question:** "What are three concrete actions you can take to move from the 'Interpretation' column back to the 'Observation' column?" (Listen for: Pause and wait. Watch more closely. Ask a respectful question. Acknowledge to myself that I don't know. Check my assumption with a trusted local friend or colleague.)
- **Key Insight to Uncover:** Developing respectful communication strategies.
 - **Question:** "Asking questions is key, but how we ask matters. Let's brainstorm. What is the difference between a judgmental question and a curious question?"
 - **Practice:** "Instead of asking, 'Why do you all eat with your hands? It's so messy,' what is a more respectful, learning-oriented question you could ask?" (Guide them to phrases like: "I've noticed that eating with hands is the custom here. I would love to learn the proper way to do it. Is there a meaning behind it?" or "Could you help me understand the traditional way of eating here?").
 - **Final Takeaway Question:** "Based on everything we've discussed, what is the single most important attitude you can pack in your suitcase for this journey?" (Guide them towards words like humility, curiosity, patience, respect, openness).

Activity 2.2: Stereotype gallery walk

Procedure:

- Post several sheets of flip chart paper around the room. On each, write the name of a country or region relevant to the volunteers (e.g., "Kenya," "Peru," "Southeast Asia," and importantly, "Our Home Country").
- Give participants markers and ask them to walk around the room and anonymously write down common stereotypes they have heard about each place/group of people.
- Once the "gallery" is full, have the group walk around and read everything in silence.
- **Debrief:** In a circle, facilitate a critical discussion: Where do these stereotypes come from (media, history, jokes)? Who benefits from them? What is their impact on the people being stereotyped? Why was it important to include our own country? How can we actively challenge these stereotypes in our thoughts and actions?

Time: 50min

The goal is not for volunteers to become experts on another culture, but to become skilled at being humble, listening deeply, and comfortably saying, "I don't know, could you help me understand?" This frames curiosity as a strength.



Session 3: Power, Privilege, and Partnership (13:30 - 15:00)

Objectives:

To create a visceral understanding of privilege and inequality, and to critique top-down "helping" models in favor of partnership.

Activity 3.1: The Power Walk

Procedure:

- Ask participants to form a straight line across the middle of the room.
- Give each person a role card to read and internalize (e.g., "You are a 25-year-old male volunteer from Canada," "You are a 45-year-old female community leader in the host village," "You are a 14-year-old boy from the host village"). More examples in Appendix 1
- Read a series of statements. Participants take a step forward or backward based on the statement's application to their new identity.
 - **Examples:** "Take a step forward if you can easily access quality healthcare." "Take a step back if your safety has ever been threatened due to your gender." "Take a step forward if you are confident the police would help you." More examples in appendix 1.
- **Debrief:** After about 15 statements, the group will be spread across the room. Ask them to look around and observe the positions. Do not rush this part. The physical distance between participants in the room is the most powerful "teacher." Allowing them to feel and observe from their final positions is essential before the intellectual analysis begins. Avoid letting people immediately return to the comfort of a circle. The debrief is the most important part: "Without speaking, I want you to take a moment to notice your position in the room." "Look ahead of you. Look behind you. Notice who is near you and who is far away." "Pay attention to the physical space, the gaps between people. What does this gap feel like?" "Notice any feelings that are coming up for you in this position—no need to name them yet, just notice them."

Time: 45min

Materials: Pre-written role cards, an open space, case studies of "development dilemmas."

Trainers guide:

Phase 1:

Sharing from Position

(5-7 minutes):

Facilitate a brief sharing session while they are still spread out. This gives voice to the physical experience:

- How does it feel to be at the front?
- At the back?
- What does this physical distance represent?
- How does this power and privilege affect the volunteer-community relationship? Etc

Phase 2:

De-Roling and Re-Grouping

Support Info for the Trainer: It is vital to have a clear "de-roling" step. This allows participants to consciously leave the emotions of their assigned character behind and process the rest of the activity as themselves.

Instructions:

- **Formal De-Roling:** "Thank you for that. Now, I invite you to consciously let go of the character you were playing. Take your role card, read it one last time, and then place it on the floor in front of you. You are no longer that person. Take a deep breath and shake it off. You are back in this room as yourself."
- **Forming a Circle:** "Now, as yourselves, please come and form a circle so we can discuss what we have just experienced."
- **(Optional) Role Reveal:** You can briefly have each person state what their role was. This helps connect the abstract positions to concrete identities.

Phase 3:

The "So What?" (Analyzing the System)

Support Info for the Trainer: The key here is to shift the focus away from individual feelings of guilt or blame and towards an understanding of the systems that create inequality. Your questions should guide them to see the "rules of the game" rather than judging the players.

Key Questions to Ask:

- **On Agency vs. System:** "Was your final position in the room a result of your individual choices, effort, or merit during the activity?" (The answer is no). "So what did determine where you ended up?" (Guide them to understand it was the starting profile—the systemic advantages or disadvantages they were given).
- **On the Meaning of the "Steps":** "What do the 'steps' we took in this simulation represent in the real world?" (Listen for: access to education, resources, safety, healthcare, social networks, justice, opportunity).
- **On Global Dynamics:** "This was a simulation in a room, but how does the final arrangement of people reflect the power dynamics we see in the world, particularly between countries in the Global North and the Global South?"
- **On the Volunteer's Position:** "Let's talk specifically about the 'volunteer' roles. Where did most of the volunteer characters end up? What does this tell you about the position of power and privilege you automatically carry with you when you arrive in your host community, regardless of your personal financial situation or your good intentions?"

Phase 4:

The "Now What?" (Applying to the Volunteer Role)

Support Info for the Trainer: This is the most crucial part of the debrief. You must help participants connect this powerful, emotional experience to their future behavior. The goal is to cultivate humility and a partnership mindset.

Key Questions to Ask:

- **On Responsibility:** "Knowing that you are likely entering the community from a position nearer the 'front of the room,' what responsibility does that place on you?"
- **On Relationship Dynamics:** "How can this invisible power imbalance affect your daily relationships with local colleagues and community members, even when everyone is friendly?"
 - Follow-ups: "Might people be hesitant to disagree with you? Could they be more likely to agree with your ideas, even if they aren't the best ones? How might this prevent you from getting honest feedback?"
- **On Practical Actions:** "Privilege isn't something to feel guilty about, but it is something to be aware of so you can act responsibly. What are some concrete, daily actions you can take to actively mitigate or 'level out' this power imbalance?" (Guide them to practical answers):
 - Listening more than speaking.
 - Asking for opinions and genuinely using the advice given.
 - Taking the posture of a learner, not an expert.
 - Amplifying the voices of local colleagues in meetings.
 - Being transparent about your own limitations and what you don't know.
 - Building friendships outside of the formal project structure.
- **On Redefining "Help":** "After this experience, how has your understanding of the word 'help' or your role as a 'helper' changed?"

Trainer's Closing Note for the Activity:

"This activity is not designed to make anyone feel guilty for the privileges they have. Guilt is not a productive emotion. The goal is awareness. This awareness is a powerful tool. It allows you to move from acting unconsciously to acting consciously. It helps you shift from a dynamic of 'helping the less fortunate' to one of building genuine, respectful partnerships between equals."

Activity 3.2: Development Dilemmas

Procedure:

Time: 45 min

- In small groups, provide short case studies of well-intentioned projects with negative unintended consequences (e.g., a free clothing donation that destroys the local tailor economy). More case studies ideas in Appendix 1.
- Ask groups to discuss: What went wrong? Whose voices were not heard? What assumptions were made? What would a more sustainable, partnership-based approach look like?
- Debrief by introducing the concept of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), which focuses on a community's existing strengths rather than its needs and deficits.

Trainers guide:

Introducing Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

When to Introduce It:

This concept should be introduced at the end of the "Development Dilemmas" debrief, after the groups have discussed the negative consequences in their case studies. It serves as the positive, constructive alternative to the failed models they just analysed.

How to Introduce It:

1. Summarize the Problem

Start by synthesizing the discussion about the case studies.

"In all of these examples—the water pump, the shoe donations, the school building—we see a similar pattern. The projects, despite their good intentions, ultimately failed or caused harm. What was the common starting point for all of these outside groups?"

(Guide the participants to the answer: They all started by focusing on a problem, a need, or a deficiency. They saw a community that was "lacking" something and came in as "experts" to provide a fix.)

2. Introduce the Two Competing Mindsets

Use a whiteboard or flip chart to draw two columns, creating a simple visual for the group.

- **Column 1: The Needs-Based Approach (The "Empty Glass")**
 - "This is the traditional approach we saw in the case studies. It starts by mapping a community's problems, needs, and deficits."
 - "Under this model, the community members are often seen as clients or recipients of services. The outside organization is the expert who designs and delivers solutions for them."
 - "The unintended result, as we saw, is often a sense of powerlessness and dependency within the community."
- **Column 2: The Asset-Based Approach (The "Full Glass")**
 - "There is another way to think about development, called Asset-Based Community Development, or ABCD."
 - "ABCD flips the entire model on its head. It doesn't start by asking 'What's wrong here?'. It starts by asking, 'What's strong here?'"
 - "It begins by mapping a community's assets, strengths, and capacities. Under this model, community members are seen as co-producers and agents of their own change. They are the experts on their own lives."

3. Define What an "Asset" Is

It's crucial to clarify that "assets" are not just about money or infrastructure.

"When we talk about assets, we're talking about a wide range of resources that every single community possesses. These include:"

- **Assets of Individuals:** The skills, talents, passions, and experiences of every person. (e.g., a person's ability to cook, to organize, to listen, their knowledge of local history, their artistic talent).
- **Community Associations:** The network of local groups that forms the social fabric. (e.g., women's groups, youth clubs, sports teams, neighborhood associations, reading circles).





- **Local Institutions:** The formal institutions present in the community. (e.g., the local school, clinic, market, library, community hall).
- **Physical & Natural Resources:** The land, local parks, buildings, rivers, and other physical spaces.
- **Cultural Heritage:** The community's unique stories, traditions, music, and ways of knowing.

4. Redefine the Volunteer's Role

This is the key takeaway for the participants. Connect the ABCD concept directly to their future actions.

- "So, if you adopt an ABCD mindset, your role as a volunteer fundamentally changes."
- "You are no longer a 'fixer' whose job is to bring solutions from the outside."
- "Your new role becomes that of a facilitator, a partner, and a connector. Your primary job is to listen and to help people discover the strengths they already possess. Your value comes from asking good questions, not from having all the answers."

A Practical Question to Leave Them With:

"Instead of arriving and asking, 'What do you need?', which positions you as the provider and them as deficient, what is a question you could ask that reflects an ABCD approach?"

(Give them a moment to think, then offer examples):

- "What is something you are proud of in this community?"
- "Could you tell me about a time this community worked together to make a positive change?"
- "What are the skills and talents of the young people here?" etc.



Session 4: Practical Skills for the Field (15:15 - 16:45)

Objectives:

To practice skills in clear communication and to explore constructive approaches to conflict resolution in an interactive way.

Materials:

Paper, pens, whiteboard or flip chart.

Activity 4.1: Blind Drawing

Time: 30 min

Procedure:

- Divide the group into pairs, sitting back-to-back.
- One person (the "Describer") gets a simple drawing of abstract, geometric shapes. The other person (the "Artist") gets a blank piece of paper and a pen.
- The Describer must explain how to draw the shape without using any names of shapes (e.g., instead of "draw a square," say "draw a line down, then take a right turn for the same distance..."). The Artist cannot speak.
- Compare the original to the drawing and then switch roles.
- Debrief: Discuss the challenges of communicating clearly when you have different perspectives. Emphasize the importance of active listening, asking clarifying questions (which can be introduced in a second round), and being patient with miscommunication.

Activity 4.2: Forum Theatre

Procedure:

Time: 60 min

- **Develop a Scene:** As a group, brainstorm a common conflict scenario (e.g., "A volunteer feels their local supervisor is not giving them meaningful work, just keeping them busy").
- **First Performance:** A few volunteers act out the scene, showing the conflict escalating to an unsatisfactory conclusion.
- **Second Performance:** The scene is performed again. This time, any member of the audience ("spect-actor") can yell "Stop!", step in to replace one of the actors, and try a different action or line to see if it leads to a better outcome.
- **Debrief:** After several interventions, discuss which strategies were most effective and why. This empowers volunteers with a toolkit of constructive approaches to conflict, rather than just a single "right" answer.



Closing: A Message to Your Future Self (16:45 - 17:00)

Objectives:

To provide a moment for personal goal-setting and reflection, and to formally close the training day.

Materials:

Blank postcards or note cards, envelopes, pens.

Activity 5.1: Postcards to Myself & Final Reflections

Procedure:

- Hand out a postcard and pen to each participant.
- Ask them to write a short message to their future self, to be read in the half into their placement (so if it's two weeks, they should read it after a week, if it is 6 months they should read it after 3 months). It could be a reminder of their core motivation, a piece of advice from today, or a hope for who they will be at that point.
- Have them seal it in, write a date of the opening and take it with them.
- **Final Circle:** To close, go around the circle and ask each person to share one word that captures how they feel now, and one word of hope for their journey ahead. Thank them for their energy and participation.

Session 3: Power, Privilege, and Partnership

Activity 1: The power walk

Role Cards (for 15 Volunteers)

You are a 28-year-old male doctor from Slovenia, volunteering for 3 months. You have a stable income back home and a supportive family.

You are the 50-year-old European male director of the international NGO that funds this project. You fly in for short visits.

You are a 24-year-old female volunteer from Slovenia who comes from a wealthy family. This trip is part of your "gap year" before starting your master's degree.

You are the 45-year-old male owner of a large, successful farm in the host community. You are also a local politician and employ several people from the village.

You are a 25-year-old male volunteer from Slovenia, who worked two jobs for a year to save up enough money for this trip.

You are the 35-year-old male local project coordinator, employed by the host country NGO. You have a university degree and live in the capital city, visiting the project weekly.

You are the 40-year-old male primary school headmaster in the host village. You are well-respected and have a government salary.

You are a 30-year-old female nurse from Slovenia, using your annual leave to volunteer for 6 weeks.

You are the 38-year-old female local primary school teacher in the host village. You have two children and support your elderly parents.

You are a 19-year-old boy from the host village. You did well in secondary school and are now in the city trying to find work to send money back to your family.

You are a 45-year-old woman from the host village. You are a subsistence farmer and a widow with four children to support.

You are a 16-year-old girl from the host village. You were a good student but had to drop out of school last year to help care for your younger siblings.

You are a 68-year-old man from the host village. You are a respected elder with deep knowledge of local traditions, but you have no formal education or pension.

You are a 22-year-old woman from the host village. You work cleaning the project office and guest house where the volunteers stay.

Session 3: Power, Privilege, and Partnership

Activity 1: The power walk

Facilitator Statements

1. Take a step forward if you have a passport.
2. Take a step forward if you grew up in a home that had more than 50 books.
3. Take a step forward if you finished secondary school.
4. Take a step forward if you went to a university.
5. Take a step back if you have ever had to skip a meal because there wasn't enough food.
6. Take a step forward if you can get clean drinking water from a tap inside your home.
7. Take a step forward if you have reliable electricity in your home.
8. Take a step back if you or an immediate family member have ever had to work in the fields for your food.
9. Take a step forward if you have your own personal bank account.
10. Take a step forward if you feel you are represented positively and often in mainstream movies and media.
11. Take a step back if your opinion has ever been ignored or dismissed because of your gender.
12. Take a step forward if you feel safe walking alone in your community at night.
13. Take a step back if you have ever felt you were treated disrespectfully by people in authority.
14. Take a step forward if you have access to quality healthcare less than 30 minutes away from your home.
15. Take a step forward if you have daily access to high-speed internet.
16. Take a step forward if you have travelled on an airplane for a holiday.
17. Take a step back if you have ever been offered a job or opportunity primarily because of your family connections rather than your own merit.
18. Take a step forward if you are confident that the police or legal system would treat you fairly.
19. Take a step forward if you believe your voice holds significant weight in project-related meetings.
20. Take a step forward if you can make major life decisions without needing permission or approval from your family or community leaders.

Case Studies: Development Dilemmas

Case Study 1: The Central Water Pump

- The Intention: To improve health and save local women hours of labour by providing easy access to clean water.
- The Project: An international NGO uses its funds and technical expertise to drill a modern, efficient borehole and install a central hand pump in a village. This replaces the series of traditional, open wells where women used to gather.
- The Unintended Consequences: The traditional wells were also the primary social hub for the women of the village. It was where they shared news, organized community events, and supported one another. The new, highly efficient pump is a point of transaction, not a place for connection. Women become more socially isolated, and the community's informal information network weakens. Furthermore, when the new pump eventually breaks, no one in the village has the specialized training or expensive spare parts to fix it, leaving them with no access to water at all.

Case Study 2: The "One-for-One" Shoe Donation

- The Intention: To protect children in low-income communities from foot injuries and soil-transmitted diseases by giving them free shoes.
- The Project: A popular shoe company in a developed country creates a "buy one, give one" model. For every pair of trendy shoes sold, the company donates a new pair to a child in a partner community in the Global South.
- The Unintended Consequences: The massive, continuous influx of free shoes completely destroys the local economy for footwear. Local cobblers, shoe repairers, and market sellers who used to make a living from their craft cannot compete with a free product and are forced to close their businesses. This increases local unemployment and creates a long-term dependency on external aid. When the donation program eventually ends or moves to another region, the local shoe-making skills and businesses have vanished.

Case Study 3: The Volunteer-Built Schoolhouse

- The Intention: To provide children with a safe, modern, and comfortable place to learn.
- The Project: A group of enthusiastic international volunteers raises a large sum of money. They travel to a village and spend their summer building a brand new schoolhouse out of concrete blocks and with a tin roof, which is much sturdier than the existing mud-and-thatch structure.
- The Unintended Consequences: The volunteers never coordinated with the local ministry of education, which does not have the budget to staff the new school with a trained teacher or provide it with books and supplies. The beautiful building sits empty. Additionally, the concrete design is extremely hot in the local climate, and the materials cannot be easily repaired with local resources. Because the community was not involved in the design or construction, they feel no sense of ownership or responsibility for its upkeep.

Case Study 4: The High-Yield "Miracle" Crop

- The Intention: To fight hunger and increase incomes for small-scale farmers by introducing a more productive crop.
- The Project: A large development agency provides farmers with a new, genetically modified variety of maize seed that promises to double their harvest. Along with the seeds, they provide guidance on using specific chemical fertilizers and pesticides to maximize the yield.
- The Unintended Consequences: The "miracle" seeds are sterile; they cannot be saved from one harvest to plant the next year, so farmers must buy new seeds from the corporation every single year, creating debt. The traditional seed varieties, which were more resilient to local droughts and pests, are quickly abandoned and their genetic diversity is lost. The required chemicals degrade the long-term health of the soil and pollute the local water supply, impacting the health of people and livestock.

Case Study 5: The Free Clothing Bales

- The Intention: To provide clothing for people who cannot afford new garments and to reduce textile waste from developed countries.
- The Project: A charity collects tons of used clothing from donation bins in a wealthy country. They sort it, pack it into large bales, and ship it to a partner country, where it is distributed at very low cost or for free in local markets.
- The Unintended Consequences: This flood of cheap, second-hand clothing makes it impossible for the local textile industry to survive. Weavers who produced traditional fabrics, tailors who sewed custom garments, and cotton farmers all lose their livelihoods. The unique, traditional clothing styles of the region begin to disappear, replaced by generic Western fashion. The country's economy becomes more dependent on imports, and a vibrant part of its cultural heritage is eroded.



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