



Staff members have an important influence on the volunteers. Volunteers sense if staff put up with them against their will and they try not to be where they are not wanted. Staff can also make a big difference on the positive side through little signs of appreciation (for example a thank you, a gift, an article in the newsletter/local paper, an invitation, a non-work-related chat) that make the volunteers belong, feel at home, respected and valued. That's why it is important to have staff on the voluntary service's side.

It is important that all actors involved know the framework of the voluntary service: why the organisation does it and who has which role.

- There should be a clear distinction between the volunteers' and the staff's role and status which justifies one being paid and the other not, which justifies that paid staff can be requested to do overtime but volunteers not (unless they agree), etc. If this "contract" is clear from the beginning there should not be too many hiccups in working together.
- The volunteers and the staff that an organisation is working with could be seen as a team with complementary roles.
- This team spirit could be increased by a common evaluation of the team of workers (volunteers and staff together) and not only an assessment of the volunteers by the staff worker.
- And when there are little rewards (for example a dinner, a little gift) make sure you do not leave out the staff workers providing the vital support for the volunteer.

4.3 Ongoing support of volunteers



It is quite a challenge for young volunteers to go and have a taste of life and voluntary service abroad, even more when it is their first time, the more different the host culture is and the longer the stay will last. Therefore volunteer support throughout the project is vital for the well-being of the volunteers and for the success of the project. Especially within long-term voluntary service, there should be

a support person (sometimes also called a mentor, coach, volunteer manager, tutor, etc.) who guides the learning process of the volunteers and their contribution to the project. Refer to the end of this chapter for some things to think about related to support in short-term voluntary service.

GROWing

A concrete model for supporting volunteers is the "GROW model" developed by John Whitmore. The support person in the voluntary service is there to facilitate the "growth" of the volunteer within the project and into the new environment. Every letter stands for an area to address in the work with your volunteers. Addressing these different letters of the GROW model one after another helps you structure the way in which you make the most of the volunteers' potential – both for your organisation and for the volunteers:

	GOALS Where do we want to go?
	REALITY What are our strengths & weaknesses?
	OPTIONS What are our possibilities & options?
	WILL Which option do we both want?

The **G** stands for **Goals**: it is paramount to sit together with the volunteer to define the goals of the voluntary service both for the hosting organisation and for the volunteer (the importance of this has already been mentioned on several occasions in this T-kit when talking about the preparation). If you do not determine (both for the short as well as the long term) where you want to be heading, you will never be able to assess if you did indeed reach this (see also Chapter 5.1 Evaluation).

The **R** refers to **Reality**: once the goals are set and clear for both parties (transparency is the mother of a good project), it is important to see to what extent the reality, the concrete situation of the project and the volunteer, allow for the easy reaching of goals. This should be a description of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the project. What is the reality which you are facing in relation to the goals?



This will lead to the discussion of the **O** of **Options** – if you found out in the previous stage that there are certain learning points for the volunteer or certain areas for improvement of the placement to be addressed, then you should also come up with different options and actions to implement to make things (even) better. Come up with a menu with different concrete actions to take which will improve the voluntary service.

The **W** of **Will** then refers to the will or decision to implement one or more of these options for improvement, which both parties can agree on. Options that have been negotiated together on an equal basis have more chance of success. You could also determine a time span after which you check on the progress made and after which you decide to continue the chosen option or to try another or an additional one.

Sometimes you could get stuck in one stage of the model and it could be necessary to take one step back and reconsider the goals you really want to achieve or to look realistically to the possibilities that your organisation or the volunteer can offer (reality).

4.3.1 The volunteer support person

Now, if you are (going to be) the volunteer support person in your IVS, you should ensure in the ideal case the functions described below in this chapter. You can either be superman or superwoman and do it all on your own, but in most cases you could involve other persons (for instance colleagues, returned volunteers, your family) to fulfil this full range of functions. You can only take up as many functions as you have time for doing these functions properly!

Within IVS, we want to highlight three areas that are particular prominent and that need special attention from the support person. Since we are talking in this T-kit about non-skilled volunteers, often they need to adopt or adapt the working culture and develop some new skills first in order to become more efficient in their tasks; well-planned learning or training support could promote this. But the volunteers do not only work, they will also have to build up a new life in their new environment. Part of this is coming to grips with the different culture (even if the culture at first does not seem different) and volunteers

will most likely benefit from intercultural support. Besides the intercultural component, there is also the need for a new social life, for which social support (depending on the independence of the volunteers) would be a great help.

Besides these specific points of focus, the volunteer support person should have (or develop) the following qualities:

- The first and foremost quality of a support person is being available. He or she is the person that the volunteers need to be able to turn to when they need it most. Therefore it would be handy to create a system and atmosphere in which the volunteer knows when and how to reach the support person. The volunteers should be made to feel comfortable enough to interrupt the support person in his/her normal work when necessary.

You could for example draw up an “alarm bell procedure”. This can be any agreed signal (for example writing an e-mail with ALARM in the subject, giving a red card, pulling the support person into the meeting room, saying you’re fed up) which is to be used in agreed circumstances (for instance when having personal problems, when you have had enough of it all, when depressed, when missing home, when having big worries or physical problems). When the volunteer or support person rings the “alarm bell”, they should give each other their undivided attention, talk and listen, and work on solutions.

- The support person should follow up suggestions and keep an eye on needs. The persons responsible for the volunteers play a key role in the orientation and induction sessions built in at the beginning of the voluntary service. They should be the ones following up on the needs, suggestions and expectations of the volunteers discussed in these orientation sessions. It helps to record these needs and expectations and check at regular intervals during the voluntary service if they are being met or not.

Perhaps you can visualise them on a flip chart paper on your “volunteer wall” in the office or on the volunteer bulletin board to make sure that neither you, nor the volunteers will forget. Of course expectations can change so you might have to update your flip charts.



- The support person should also make sure that the volunteers get the resources and tools needed to accomplish their tasks but also for their personal needs. This can be obvious things related to the tasks such as a working space in the office, sufficient and appropriate tools for the manual work the volunteers are doing, a computer for word-processing. But a job-related “push-in-the-back” can also take the form of training, job shadowing, question and answer sessions, buying a new manual or reference book (in the volunteer’s language) and so forth.

For the personal needs you might think of e-mail facilities to keep the link to friends and family back home, laundry facilities, contacts with the local sports club to keep in shape, continuing your hobby abroad etc. (this is especially important for long-term stays), basically everything that enables you to have a pleasant stay in the host country.

- Another important task is the monitoring or assessing of the performance of the volunteers focusing both on the positive achievements and the learning points (see also Chapter 5.1 Evaluation): for example this involves meetings at regular intervals, making the volunteers feel respected, steering the volunteers. It is important to give the volunteers the same treatment as the other employees: consider volunteers as part of your staff and for example refer to them as volunteer staff and paid staff. This extra recognition is the icing on the cake.
- Since the volunteers are coming to live and work in a new environment to them, giving feedback to the volunteer is crucial: it lets the volunteers know where they stand. A prerequisite to giving feedback is creating a “fearless” atmosphere in which both parties understand that the comments are only steps in a learning process and not a definitive judgment on someone’s personality or capacities.

Often feedback or evaluation focuses on the things that went wrong, but you should not forget to mention the positive things as well. If there is reason to give negative feedback, it is important to focus on an objective description of the situation. Explain clearly why the action or behaviour of the volunteer was problematic and negotiate together how you could learn from this for the future, in other

words what the volunteer would or could do differently next time if something similar happens. Turn the problem into a constructive learning experience.

When giving feedback it is best to use “I” statements clarifying that this is your position or feeling. “You” statements tend to put people down and to blame them for something that happened. They are also more likely to cause a defensive response (for example say “I don’t like the way you arrange your papers” instead of “you are an unorganised person”).

- Active listening is certainly also a skill that you will need as a support person. First of all the surroundings should be adapted to the seriousness of the conversation – do not have your meetings with volunteers in the middle of the office with different ears listening in, with noise of copying machines or colleagues, or with a distracting computer screen within reach. Take your time instead of rushing to a quick-fix solution. Active listening is about making the other person feel comfortable enough to tell you his or her story; it is about letting the other person talk and more importantly trying to understand what the other person is saying (not only the obvious but also reading between the lines).

Show that you are listening through little nods, smiles, encouraging questions, etc. (without overdoing it!). To make sure you have understood the (hidden) message, rephrase it in your own words and ask for confirmation (“Do I understand correctly that you want...?”), but do not take over talking! If you do not understand ask for clarification (do not guess). Do not judge but try to understand the message.

- All these techniques are very useful but they rely a lot on a good command of a common language. So what can you do if there is a language barrier? Bad mastering of the language does not equal no command of the language. So sometimes it already helps to repeat questions more slowly, use different and/or simpler words or allow more time to understand a question and to phrase a reply. Take your time! If this does not work you can make things more visual by drawing, using symbols or pointing at objects or acting it out (words can be used in parallel – do not stop talking altogether!). Or what about pointing out a word or sentence in a phrase book?



If you have the skills or resources you can use another language that the volunteers are more comfortable in (for example their mother tongue or English). What will not help is giving up and letting the communication break down. Laughing generally does not make the volunteers feel any better either. Instead of embarrassing the volunteers, make them feel at ease and explain that it is normal in the beginning to struggle a bit with the language – “it will soon be better”.

- Managing volunteers also means managing their motivation. Since this is a crucial part for the success of an IVS, there is a complete chapter on this topic elsewhere in this T-kit (see Chapter 4.2.1 Motivating the volunteer).

4.3.2 Training support

As mentioned before, the support person has a determining role in the training of the volunteers for their job. This is not only of benefit for the host organisation to get the tasks done more efficiently and to a higher quality, but setting up training for volunteers will make them feel more integrated, more at ease in their job, more valued and recognised and in the end more motivated. Also in short-term voluntary projects such as work camps, it might be worth your while to integrate a workshop on the tasks you are doing, whether it be painting, fundraising or cleaning techniques. It is rewarding if you do not just do what you are told to do but get some explanation as to why things are done in a certain way.

In an orientation session with the volunteers at the beginning of their IVS a specific training plan can be negotiated. Obviously this plan should be monitored continuously and should be ready to be changed according to the needs of the volunteer which sometimes only become apparent in the course of the work. The plan can be made up of different activities, not only job-related training, but also observing or taking part in meetings, question and answer sessions with a colleague, one-to-one meetings, reading background manuals or using training material (CD Rom, school books on the subject), etc. Peer training by another volunteer is often very appreciated as it gives the insight of someone in the same position. You are basically limited by your inspiration and by the resources you planned for this.

Example of a training plan

Going back to our example of ELKA, the ecological youth club that is hosting two volunteers to develop nature and adventure walks through the mountains (see Chapter 2.2 The project cycle), Jason, the support person of this project developed the following training plan.

- On their first full working day they will receive a half-day induction training about the aim, work and structure of the youth club ELKA. They will be introduced to all the staff and active volunteers in the course of a common lunch. In the afternoon they will be introduced to the area. This day is organised and led by Susan, the project manager.
- Within the first four weeks the two volunteers should attend a one-week course on outdoor education and adventure walks run by the national association of outdoor education, near the capital.
- They will also receive books on outdoor education techniques and reports from other organisations that have done similar things before.
- They can participate in the annual meeting of the network of national environmental youth organisations that ELKA belongs to; there is always a three-day seminar on nature issues linked to it.
- Within the youth club they can use Gerard as a resource person as he has been to two adventure camps in the south of Europe before.
- Besides this they should take part in the regular team counselling sessions (once a month, half a day) concerning the day-to-day work at ELKA.

4.3.3 Intercultural Support

You are mostly not aware of the importance of your own environment, your familiar neighbourhood, friends and family for your feeling of security and comfort unless you have left it for a while. Living and working in a different cultural context leads to confrontation – between the familiar and the unknown, the



regular and the first time, the rituals and the new. After an initial phase of excitement with the exoticism of their new life, the volunteers nearly always reach a phase in which they experience reduced efficiency in their day-to-day interactions and absence of familiarity within the host culture. This is called “culture shock” (see graph on intercultural adaptation in Chapter 3.3.1 Preparation of the volunteers).

The support person should keep an eye out for the symptoms of culture shock, which can be both physical (for example lack of hunger, sleeplessness, tiredness, minor aches) or psychological (for example homesickness, anger, fear of being cheated, resentment towards locals, impatience, defensive or aggressive behaviour). The ability to handle culture shock varies from person to person (according to the personality, but also according to previous intercultural experiences) but it also depends largely on the preparation for this confrontation before departure (see Chapter 3.3.1 Preparation of the volunteers) which can be developed and built on to during the voluntary service.

The way of addressing culture shock should be adapted case by case, depending on the volunteers and on the preparation they have had. Here are some suggestions as to what you can do as support person:

- Make sure that the volunteers know that there is such a thing called “culture shock” and a way to recognise it (through for example the symptoms quoted above). Culture shock is neither good nor bad, it is just a situation that many people go through when abroad for a long time.
- Take time for culture shock. Let the volunteers air their frustrations and listen to their stories. A day off work or an excursion (away from it all) with the support person to talk through things could do wonders. Some time to breath and to reflect.
- Try to avoid judging cultures. Explain them instead to the extent that you can. Give information about the culture, the country, the system, the people, etc. Information takes away the uncertainty and lack of efficiency that the volunteers experience.
- Motivate and encourage the volunteers to see it as a challenging learning experience. Make a game out of interpreting

culturally different behaviour and give feedback as to whether the volunteer is right or add what the meaning really is.

- Put the volunteers in contact with former volunteers that have gone through a similar experience, perhaps in the opposite way (having been in the country of the volunteers), in order to get peer support from each other.
- Or you could give them a break from the different culture and the different language, through a meeting with a fellow country person (for example friend, family, volunteer from that country), or possibly getting some magazines, books or videos from home, phoning home.
- In order to reduce the feeling of missing home, try to find the activities from home in the host country (for instance sports, TV-show, hobbies, fast-food), probably in an adapted way (for example water-skiing instead of skiing, chips with mayonnaise instead of vinegar).
- Encourage the volunteers not to give up but on the contrary to engage in even more social interaction with the host culture in order to decipher its different ways and to become more fluent in intercultural interaction with others (trying out the new way of greeting, guessing what someone would find tasty or not, etc.).
- Encourage the volunteers to take the intercultural learning process as it comes and if necessary to review the objectives they had in mind with their voluntary service, if the intercultural component takes more time then expected, without it having to be a failure.
- Promote complexity in thinking, distinguishing between one person and the rest of the group, between a particular situation and all situations (because one person was rude in a stressful situation does not mean that all persons from the country are always rude).
- Focus also on similarities between the host country and the country of origin of the volunteers, in order to realise that the volunteers already have a lot of cultural baggage with them. However do not play



down the importance of the culture shock or cultural differences!

- Value diversity and difference. The world is so much more beautiful and more efficient with different approaches to similar issues. The volunteers are about to be able to have two approaches incarnated in themselves (their own and the host culture's – to an extent).
- You can photocopy the box on culture shock in Chapter 3.3.1 Preparation of the volunteers for the volunteer to reflect on.

The development of the rest of the voluntary service depends a lot on the joint ability of both volunteers and the hosting organisation to overcome this beginning phase. If a good relationship based on trust and mutual understanding results out of this phase, it is to be expected that other periods of emotional downs can be handled successfully.

For more details on the concepts of culture and exercises to raise intercultural awareness, see the *T-kit on Intercultural Learning* available for download at www.training-youth.net.

4.3.4 Social Support

Hosting organisations tend to overlook the fact that the volunteers actually spend more time away from work than on the voluntary job. The satisfaction of the volunteers in their free time is equally important (if not more so) for the success of the voluntary service, than the tasks within the project. Staying in one's room reduced to watching television or reading books, despite the fact that there are so many exciting new opportunities outside, could lead to a feeling of isolation and wanting to return home.

For some volunteers it is sufficient to introduce them to some leisure-time facilities in the neighbourhood and to invite them along to some social gatherings or events. Others however might need a bit more support to open up to new people and new opportunities – especially if the lack of language skills is still a barrier. The extent of support needed in this respect should become clear through talks with the sending organisation beforehand and with the volunteer personally during the voluntary service.

Measures for the integration of the volunteers into the local community

- Check the special interests and hobbies of the volunteer before arrival

Knowing the interests and hobbies of the volunteer before can help to provide some names of contact persons or addresses of clubs, facilities, etc. on arrival. This is certainly a sign which makes the volunteer feel very welcome.

- Organise meetings with other volunteers, exchange students, etc. in the area

If there are several volunteers in one area, they could have a common on-arrival training at the beginning of their placement. Apart from the educational value of these events they create an early small network of friends. Since they are all in the same situation they can obviously relate well to each other. If there are too few volunteers in the area for such an event, you could also provide contacts with other foreign young people in the area.

- Introduce a "peer system"

Especially for volunteers who are not "high-flyers" in getting into contact with people and adapting to new situations, it can be very helpful to have a peer contact person acting as a bridge into the local community. This peer should be roughly the same age, ideally share some interests, and have an understanding of the situation the volunteer is in. Using former volunteers is a good solution, because of their understanding of the situation that the new volunteers are in. At the same time they have an opportunity to stay in contact with the world of IVS.

As you can see, support persons have a lot of responsibilities on their shoulders, so they should get some support and training themselves in different fields. Have a look around to see which organisations deliver training on the topics mentioned in this chapter. One of the important issues certainly is intercultural learning. Possible providers of training courses on intercultural learning at an international level are the Council of Europe (www.coe.int/youth) and the European Federation for Intercultural Learning (www.afs.org/efil). In the framework of the European Voluntary Service programme there are regular courses targeted at volunteer support persons (check with the National Agency for the YOUTH programme in your country www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth.html). Or you could check out some of the references given in the bibliography and webography.

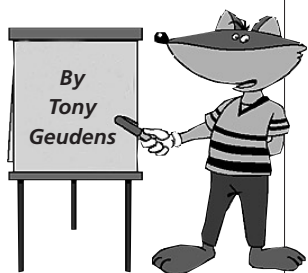


Support for short-term projects

Obviously the extent of personal support needed in short-term projects is limited in comparison to long-term projects. Nevertheless there are a few aspects organisers of work camps or other short-term projects should take into account regarding support:

- Dedicate enough time to an orientation session on the first day. Considering the relatively short duration of the stay organisers tend to neglect this part of the programme where volunteers get the chance to become familiar with the board and lodging arrangements, the immediate environment, the local people involved in the project, etc. Do not start with the actual work right on the first day. The travel, the nervousness of the volunteers about meeting new people in a different environment is the same as for a long-term project.
- Plan for some ice-breaking and team-building exercises on the first day. Much more work will be achieved when there is a good team spirit.
- The responsible support person for voluntary group projects should get some training in team-building, intercultural learning and conflict management for this task. Conflicts in such groups are possible and should not affect the whole group. As a responsible support person you should be sensitive towards conflicts arising and try to intervene carefully but in a determined manner (see also Chapter 4.4 Conflict management).
- Support persons, especially in work camps, should be present at all times. Such a person will not be accepted as a responsible and trustworthy "leader" if he or she only shows up once a week for example.

4.4 Conflict management

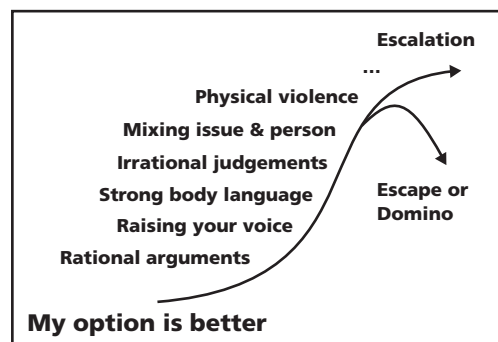


An IVS is a complex project which involves people from different backgrounds working together towards common goals, up to the moment that differences appear and become conflicts. Differences however do not equal conflicts. It is no problem to have different opinions, values, wishes or aims. However, a conflict arises when people or groups that are (or have to be) working and living together act in different directions at the expense of the other because of their differences.

For example, the project leader might find punctuality very important whereas the volunteer does not. No problem, but they will probably end up in a conflict on the morning when they are about to leave on a field trip together, with the project leader waiting in the car and the volunteer surfacing an hour later. Or, an organisation asks the volunteers to finish the new meeting room before its general assembly on Monday, but the volunteers want to spend time at the lake nearby at the weekend.

Unfortunately conflicts can evolve from little jokes to major crises. In a conflict in which there are opposite points of view, what often happens is that one wants to convince the other that they are right, that their option is better. The parties try to outdo the other, first by rational arguments, which can be reinforced with the appropriate body language and tone of voice. If no victory is in sight yet, irrational judgments and accusations which confuse the issue and the person can surface. The next step could be an escalation into physical violence. If at a certain moment one party outdoes the other and the loser cannot reciprocate anymore, the escalation is avoided but what often happens is that the losers take it out on themselves or on other people around them that are weaker, who then take it out on weaker persons, etc. This is also called the domino effect.

Escalation in conflicts



For example, one of the volunteers in a work camp in a village wears a nose ring at the renovation works of the little church. The work camp leader however thinks this is not appropriate and argues that this will give the work camp and the organisation a bad reputation. The volunteer replies that the nose ring is part of his identity and that showing something different to the local people is good to challenge their "narrow views". The voices get louder and fists are banging on the table. "You will not come to work if you do not take it out" threatens the camp leader.



Instead of sticking to his opinion about the nose ring, the volunteer puts the work camp leader down as an authoritarian person. When they are about to leave to work, the volunteer with the nose ring follows but is pushed back. After some pushing and pulling the work camp leader rips out the volunteer's nose ring. Furiously the volunteer takes his bags and leaves the living quarters, pushing over an old lady on the sidewalk.

As you can see from the examples, this chapter will focus more on social conflicts at a micro-level, meaning conflicts between individuals. There are also conflicts on a meso-level (between groups, for example the workers in a factory and the management) or macro-level (between big entities, for example between countries) but these conflicts need a more structural or political approach. We'll stick to what you as a youth worker or support person can do in the event of conflicts at the voluntary project.

4.4.1 First Aid in conflict management

The support person will often have to provide a first aid to rising conflicts in the project. However when conflicts are too big or getting out of hand, you should consider getting (professional) support. The following scheme tries to give you a structured step-by-step approach through a conflict, which allows you to deal with conflicts in a consistent way without having to be an expert in the field.

Steps through a conflict



0. First of all, if you come across a raging conflict (arguing or fighting) between two or more persons, the warring parties should be separated and there should be some time allowed to let the emotions cool down. You, as a mediator, should take measures to prevent the conflict from getting worse, for example by giving the volunteer another task, giving them the day off, work with a different partner, calling upon other persons that could help (friends, director of the organisation, parents, etc.). When peace is restored you can move on to the next step.

1. The first basic step in the management of conflicts is to see and acknowledge that there is a conflict. All parties involved (individuals or groups) should be aware (or made aware) that there is something wrong. You could point out some facts that for you could be indications of a conflict, without judging or interpreting. It is up to the people involved whether they admit there is a problem or not.

2. If they indeed see the problem, the next step would be to take the decision as to whether they want to deal with the conflict or run away from it. In most situations it is best to take up the conflict constructively, but in certain circumstances (for example limited time or energy, unequal power relation, violence) it is better to leave the conflict for what it is, trying to put up with it or to escape from the situation. You can try to break up the conflict yourself, but you can also seek for external assistance when it is above your capacities (a professional mediator for example).

3. When both parties realise that there is a conflict and want to do something about it, you move into the stage of information gathering. Sit down with the different parties separately first and try to get answers to the following questions.

What issues are at stake? How do the parties see the key moments in the development of the conflict? What are the roots or reasons of the conflict – from the perspective of the different sides! What are the underlying differences causing the conflict?



Before starting the face-to-face meeting between the different parties, it is important as a mediator that you negotiate a list of ground rules with the opponents. Some rules could be:

- listening to the other person and not interrupting (one way to see if they listen is to ask them to repeat the other's message before having their say)
- always use the I form (instead of "you didn't listen" say "I think you didn't listen to me")
- not judging or blaming
- not leaving the room until an acceptable solution is found
- everything that is said will stay between those walls
- ...?

It is important to have all the participants in your mediation meeting agreeing on these ground rules.

4. The next phase is generating possible solutions to the problem, like in a brainstorm. How could the parties involved imagine changing the situation for the better?
 - Perhaps the whole situation rests on a different interpretation or understanding of the facts and clearing out the different visions of things can help the process forward (for example: explaining that the feedback given was not meant as a reproach)
 - In conflicts of interests (for example: the project needs a report written – the volunteer wants to do creative work) compromises can be proposed as a sort of middle way (for example do a part of administrative work but also creative work)
 - In conflicts of values, beliefs, opinions and the alike, positions are difficult to negotiate so an uncompromising creative solution will have to be found (for example the Muslim volunteer is asked to organise a cooking workshop so that local people know what he or she can eat and what not)
5. Once several suggestions for solutions have been proposed by all sides, the process of negotiation can start with different options. Which are the proposals that the conflicting parties are most comfortable with? Which options are out of the question? One exercise that shows clearly what the preferences are is writing the different solutions on a piece of paper and passing

it around the table asking the parties to underline the acceptable solutions in different colours: the most often underlined solution wins. This process highlights common grounds, involves all parties actively in the solution and shows the way forward. You could even formalise the agreement by putting it in writing and have the parties sign it for extra commitment.

6. Next comes the implementation of the proposed solution, by all the people involved. A way to monitor how well the solution functions is the red flag system. You ask the participants to define "red flags" being situations that would increase tension again or move them back to a conflictive situation. For example a red flag could be "the volunteer surfs more than an hour per day on the Internet for leisure purposes" or "the colleague does not speak to me for a whole day". The red flags should be exchanged between the different parties so that everybody knows what is considered "going too far". It is important to monitor that all parties are happy with the solution and that the solution is not considered a defeat because this could lead to demotivation or disinvolvement of the volunteer or staff person, or they could take their frustration out on someone else.
7. After a predetermined period of time, you check what the results are: whether things have got better or whether red flags are popping up. If the evaluation is negative and if tension or frustrations remain, you should return to previous steps. So even though this step-by-step approach seems linear (one step coming after the other) it might be necessary to go back on your steps when the process of conflict management blocks at any stage.

Hot conflicts versus cold conflicts

These seven steps are based on a conflictive situation in which the different parties are actively and openly involved in the conflict: this is called a "*hot conflict*" (because sometimes things get really hot indeed). It is easy to find out what the issues are and who the opposing parties are because in general the different parties even want to convince you as a mediator of their point of view. Since the people involved seem comfortable enough to take up the confrontation with each other, it is most likely that they also accept to work



together on the conflict resolution on an equal footing and to engage in a process of open fearless communication.

Sometimes when there is no equal power relation between the conflicting parties, or when a party gives up retaliating at some stage in the escalation of the conflict, they could disengage from the confrontation completely. They will not fight openly for their

cause anymore but tacitly boycott or sabotage the other person or the work. This is a so-called "*cold conflict*" in which people stay cool (no arguments, no confrontation, no open fights). In this case it is necessary to work with this person to gain their motivation again and to establish an atmosphere of trust in which open communication is possible (and only then can you start the steps through a conflict).

4.4.2 The mediator in the middle

You as a youth worker or project organiser might find yourself in the middle of a conflict trying to make the best of it. The following tips might be of use when you are taking on the role of "mediator" of working people through a conflict.

- First of all the mediator should be neutral and accepted by both sides. If you are not in this position, then it is best to get someone else in to be the mediator.
- Listen to the people and do not take sides (any side) – make sure that you address equal time and energy to both parties. Do not give the parties any reason to become suspicious about your relationship with the opponents.
- Encourage the persons to talk and LET them talk (do not overthrow the other person with similar experiences you had of your own conflicts and their outcomes). Be a sounding board.
- Ask open questions.
- Do not judge, nor give advice – just paraphrase the message to check if you understood all the details.
- Make sure that the opponents listen to each other. You could make them repeat the message of the opponent before they can make their own point.
- Make sure people use "I-statements". Instead of saying "he has done a bad job" it is better to say "I don't like the job he has done".
- Involve all parties actively in the search for a satisfactory solution. Do not let people slip into a "cold conflict" situation.
- Do not try to find easy or quick solutions – take your time.
- Help the person to explore where the roots of the conflict could be: for example different values, opinions, habits, norms, goals, cultural backgrounds.
- Try to understand how the persons feel and think.
- Try to find out what roles or strategy both parties are using in the conflict.
- Ask the conflicting parties if you could help in any way.
- Make a strict distinction between the particular issue and the person (for example someone who comes late a couple of times is rapidly categorised as lazy, even though there were valid reasons for being late in most cases).
- Keep track of the progress of the conflict management in writing and check your notes with the conflicting parties.

.../



/...

- You could try to visualise the conflict in order to make the views of both sides (and yours) clearer – it also helps in focusing on the actual issues.
- Help the persons clarify the situation, perhaps the conflict is based on a (intercultural) misunderstanding: avoid judging what you do not understand and promote tolerance of ambiguity.
- Do not impose your cultural norms, but try to understand the cultural rules on both sides.
- Ask the persons whether they have an idea about how the opposite party might be feeling.
- Encourage the person to talk to the other party in the conflict. If both are ready for this, help establishing a fearless atmosphere where open communication is possible (neutral territory, with an external mediator, etc.).
- It is never too late to get other people in to help you get out of this situation. Do not feel you have to solve the conflict on your own.
- ...?

Add your own golden rules.