



## 8 Steps of Quality in International Youth Voluntary Service



# The 8 Steps of Quality in International Youth Voluntary Service

The Ubuntu International Youth Voluntary Service Award 2009 has worked to reward quality voluntary service projects in Africa and Europe. As part of this process the [Ubuntu Partnership](#), and in particular [Association of Voluntary Service Organisations](#), have developed the following cycle, which indicates key aspects of quality<sup>1</sup> in international youth voluntary service. This cycle is as follows:



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<sup>1</sup> By quality, we mean projects that demonstrate a coherent volunteer project cycle, excel in volunteer management and volunteer support, show reciprocity and respect towards organisations and stakeholders involved, maximise the impacts of the volunteer project in terms of development and development education, and are socially, financially, environmentally and institutionally sustainable.

1. **Partnership** – the best organisational partnerships are based on shared aims and objectives, a shared understanding of voluntary service, reciprocal power relationships, and clear communication. If and when possible, the very best relationships will have been cemented through face-to-face meetings.
2. **Volunteer Matching** – this means finding and matching volunteers to the individual projects available, and requires understanding of the experience necessary for fulfilment of the voluntary service placement, communication with the potential volunteer to find out motivations for being involved, and the expected outcomes of the voluntary service placement. Some sending organisations conduct interviews with volunteers and most liaise contact between hosting organisation and the volunteer; host organisations are often involved in having a say in selection of the volunteer.
3. **Volunteer Preparation** – the volunteer needs clear guidelines about the nature of the project and honest practical details of what to expect. They may also receive pre-departure trainings on intercultural learning, the rights and responsibilities of voluntary service, conflict resolution, problem solving, health and safety, and technical trainings as required.
4. **Volunteer Arrival** – this requires managing the expectations of the host community, organising logistical issues such as transfer from the airport, VISA, accommodation, and activities to integrate the volunteer into the host community. This period may include on-arrival training often with other volunteers, and the commencement of language lessons.
5. **Volunteer Hosting Period** – the period of time during which the volunteer carries out volunteer project related tasks. The volunteer might go through a period of culture shock which. To help deal with this issue, the volunteer should have access to a mentor of who has an understanding of the volunteer's role yet be independent of the host organisation. The volunteer should also have adequate supervision, language lessons, technical trainings, a mid-term evaluation, free time, but most importantly - support and understanding.

6. **Volunteer Returns Home** – the volunteer can go through a period of reverse-culture shock when he/she returns home. He/she may also benefit from evaluating experiences with other volunteers, and from being given the opportunity to talk openly about the experiences of being an international youth volunteer.
7. **Evaluation** – evaluation should proceed along all steps of the cycle. But the hosting and sending organisation should reflect on every step of the voluntary service cycle with a view to improving the quality of the volunteer project<sup>2</sup>.
8. **Multiplying Activities** – it is important that the development work that has taken place is accompanied by follow-up activities that promote development education. Regardless of whether the project takes place in the 'North' or the 'South', people can learn a lot from those returning from abroad as a volunteer. Organising talks in schools, stalls in town, writing an article for a newspaper, or even getting involved in volunteering on a local level can also satisfy a desire to continue involvement in work relating to the volunteer placement abroad.

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<sup>2</sup> The Ubuntu Award looked at the following key areas: Co-operation & Joint Decision Making, Coherence, Sustainability (environmental, financial, institutional, social), Impact (on the volunteer and on the hosting organisation and local community), Youth Empowerment, Innovation and Originality.