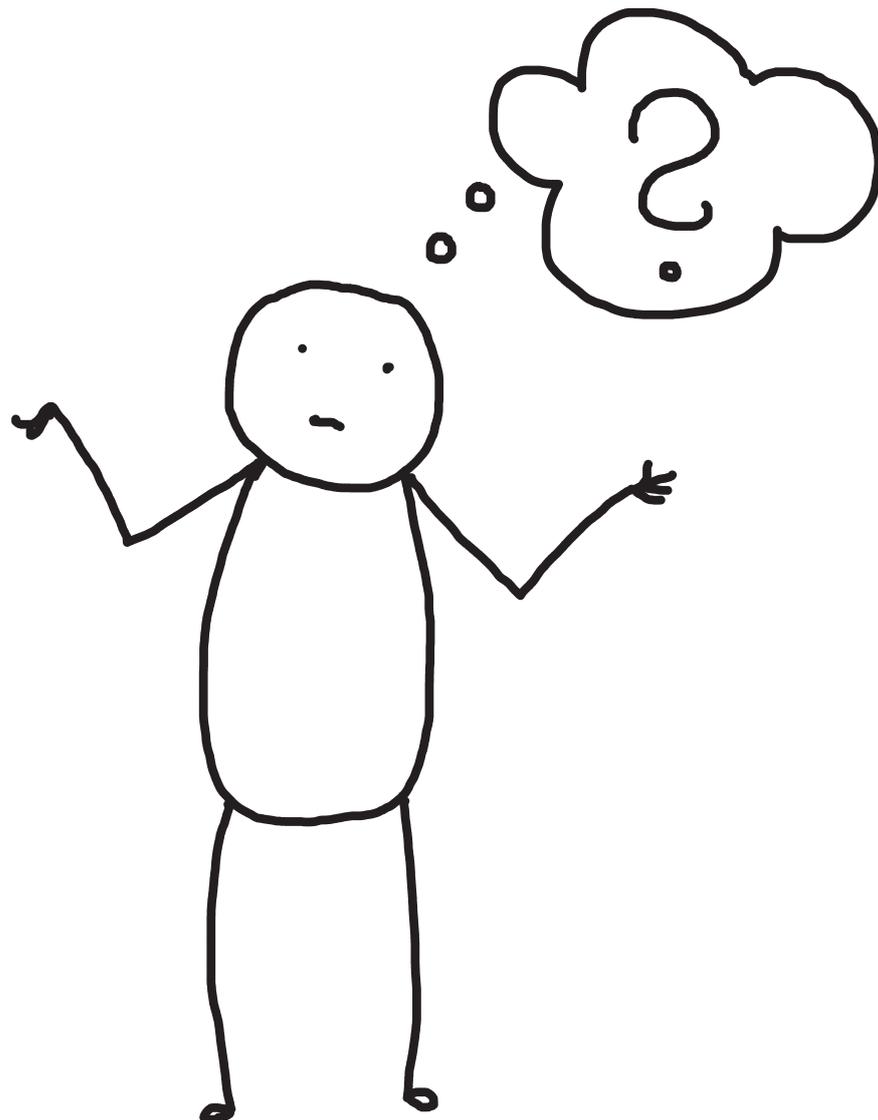


WORKSHOP

CHALLENGES

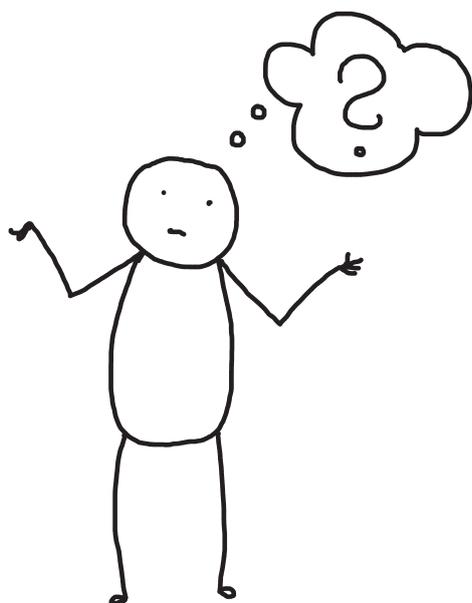
DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS
WHILE ABROAD



CHALLENGES

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS WHILE ABROAD

- Preparation for typical situations you may face while being abroad
- Developing solutions for dealing with difficult situations



Many people are confronted with similar situations during their work experience abroad: it can happen that the tasks don't relate to your expectations or that you face problems working together with your team. At the same time situations can come up in day-to-day life where you may not know what to do.

In the workshop CHALLENGES potential situations are broached using role-play and constructive solutions are sought. The aim is to prepare for difficult scenarios you may face and to look for creative ways of handling them.

FOR WHOM?

Persons who plan to work abroad in development cooperation

DURATION

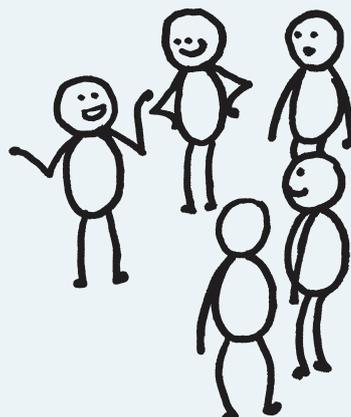
65 - 90 min.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

2 - 20

AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

from 17 years



DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS WHILE ABROAD

CONTENT

The aim of this workshop is to think about potential challenges and to practice solution-oriented action before a work placement abroad.

LIST OF MATERIALS

Per group:

– WORKSHEETS I-X

To take away:

– WORKSHEETS I-V

– LINKS & INFORMATION

EXERCISE 65-90 min. (depending on the group size)

ROLE PLAY 60 min.

1. Split into groups of two: intern and counsellor
2. The groups receive the corresponding worksheets and prepare for their roles.
3. The counsellor and the intern conduct a counselling interview.
Attention: Prepare and discuss every case example individually.
4. Each group suggests a solution which has particularly impacted them or gives an idea for an alternative way to deal with the situation in hand in a 5 minute presentation.



WORKSHEETS III-V

Inputs for instructor:

INFORMATION SHEET II

TO TAKE AWAY

Workshop documents



WORKSHEETS I-V
LINKS & INFORMATION

ROLE A: COUNSELLOR

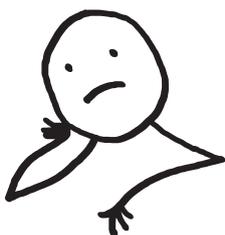
Put yourself into the role of the director of a European organisation which is facilitating work abroad in development cooperation. Today you are visiting a project which you recently sent an intern to take part in. You have already been informed by e-mail that there are a couple of difficulties. You have therefore offered a counselling interview.

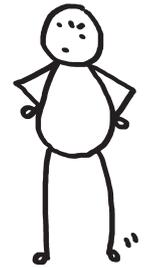


Read through the description of these difficulties and prepare yourself for the interview with the help of the questions, explanations and suggestions.

CASE STUDY 1: NOT BEING NEEDED

- Situation of the intern:** The person working abroad started in the project 2 weeks ago. Nobody tells him/her what to do although he/she keeps asking. He/she feels useless and is very frustrated.
- Question to the intern:** WHY DO YOU THINK THAT NOBODY IS GIVING YOU CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS?
- Possible explanations:**
- The team does not know where they should use you (possibly due to a lack of work experience or limited knowledge of the language).
 - The team has received too little information from the organisation that has sent you there.
 - You are seen as part of the organisation who sent you (= donor) and as such the team is uncertain whether they may use you in a work capacity.
 - They have had bad experiences with other interns from abroad.
 - Certain employers expect a great deal of initiative. Because of this it is possible that they expect you to have an idea of where you could make yourself useful.
- Question to the intern:** WHAT COULD YOU DO IN THIS SITUATION?
- Suggestions:**
- Try to take on board the perspective of the co-workers. What would you do in their situation?
 - Observe the team as they work and ask questions.
 - Ask the co-workers questions about their work, their background and possibly also about the situation in their country (e.g. in the form of interviews)
 - Think about where you might be able to help and prepare a timetable with possible tasks you could carry out.
 - Seek out the chance to have a dialogue with the boss and describe the situation in which you find yourself. Clarify what your abilities are and where you see the possibilities to have an impact.
 - The internship is also about learning about the country and the culture: read newspapers and books, talk to people in bars and taxis, get involved in hobbies such as sports, visit museums or go to cultural, sporting or other events.





CASE STUDY 2: OBSERVATIONS

Situation of the intern: The person working abroad has the feeling that some things are not proceeding in the right way. For example, there is one co-worker who often comes in too late and a child in a home has informed you that he/she doesn't get fed well enough.

Question to the intern: WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE CASE?

Inputs:

- Situations like this could have many possible causes, such as cultural norms, individual habits or subjective perceptions (the feeling of being hungry of an individual child). The important thing is not to judge too quickly and to think about finding a suitable way for dealing with the situation.

Question to the intern: WHAT COULD YOU DO IN THIS SITUATION?

Suggestions:

- Did you see the situation yourself? Observe the situation as clearly as possible and take into consideration that everything may not be exactly as you are told it is.
- Where possible ask others on the team for their views on why things are as they are, and try to consider their perspectives on the situation.
- When you are sure that something is not right, approach a representative of the project or the organization which sent you there.

CASE STUDY 3: DISTRIBUTION OF DONATIONS

Situation of the intern: The person working abroad has collected donations from relatives. At the place of work he/she sees various possibilities for how to use this money. For example, the intern is asked by a co-worker if he or she can assume responsibility for the school money for her children. At the same time it appears that the children in the orphanage need new pyjamas. Which criteria should be considered when making the decision on where to allocate funds?

Question to the intern: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER CAREFULLY WHO SHOULD RECEIVE THE MONEY?

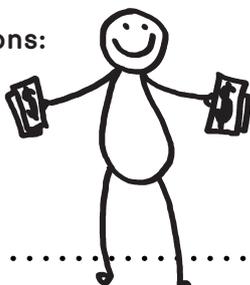
Possible explanations

- Those who do not receive anything could be miffed that you may appear to be favouring individuals, such as in the above example of the other co-worker.
- Maybe you are supporting something which is less important. Maybe the children need new shoes rather than new pyjamas.

Question to the intern: WHAT COULD YOU DO IN THIS SITUATION?

Suggestions:

- On no account should you hand out money on your own initiative. The decision as to what is most pressingly needed must be taken by management.
- It is important not to hand out presents or money to individual persons or families. It leads to jealousy and you have to accept that you will subsequently be bombarded with requests.





CASE STUDY 4: UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS

Situation of the intern: The person working abroad expected to work as a teacher, but instead now he/she has consistently been given household chores to do and has already even had to help out peeling potatoes in the kitchen.

Question to the intern: WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE CASE?

Possible explanations:

- Maybe you do not possess the necessary expertise and language skills.
- Volunteers who are only there on a short-term basis are seen as having a supporting role. They should not take on any essential tasks so that there is no dependency built around them.

Question to the intern: WHAT COULD YOU DO IN THIS SITUATION?

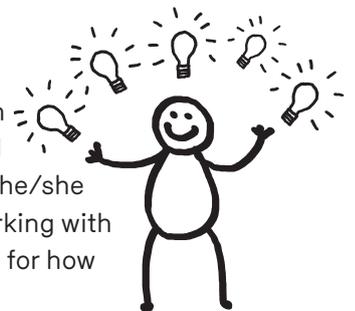
Suggestions:

- Be aware that during an internship it is necessary to adapt and bring yourself into line with the situations in hand. This would also be the case if you were at home.
- Ask yourself if you would trust yourself to take on the role of a teacher in your homeland or if you were ever taught yourself there by a teacher with no qualifications.
- Ask the person in charge why you have been given these tasks and if there might be a possibility to work in your preferred field.



CASE STUDY 5: PUTTING FORWARD IDEAS

Situation of the intern: The person working abroad wanted to take the children from the orphanage to the cinema. When he/she asked the director for permission it was declined. In addition he/she had many other great ideas for things she could do working with the children. He/she also had a few tips for co-workers for how they could carry out their work more effectively.



Question to the intern: WHY DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR IDEAS ARE SOMETIMES DECLINED?

Possible explanations:

- There are many reasons why certain things may not be possible. In the example of the cinema it is conceivable that it is against standard procedures to allow an intern to go alone with the children to the cinema.
- Even when it seems that your ideas are good, it can be that you possess too little experience to assess these things objectively

Question to the intern: WHAT COULD YOU DO IN THIS SITUATION?

Suggestions:

- Do not be fazed. Continue to put forward your ideas and ask why they are not able to be implemented.
- Search for good arguments as to why you would like to implement the ideas, but respect the fact that it is outwith your power to make a decision on this matter.

CASE STUDY 6: PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF INDIVIDUALS



Situation of the intern: The person working abroad has built up an exceptional connection with certain individual children. Sometimes he/she buys them sweets, lends them her mobile phone and he/she has already visited her favourite child’s family. Now he/she has concerns: what will happen to the child when he/she is no longer there?

Question to the intern: WHY MIGHT YOUR BEHAVIOUR BE PROBLEMATIC?

Inputs:

- It is normal to have “favourites”, but you may never show this. Preferential treatment of individuals is unfair, unprofessional and almost always leads to an unpleasant atmosphere.

Question to the intern: WHAT COULD YOU DO IN THIS SITUATION?

Suggestions:

- Try to maintain a distance and do not show it if you happen to prefer certain children. Be aware that they are not your own children and try to change from a familial to a professional role.
- Explain to the children at an early stage that you will not be there for ever, so that they can adjust themselves to this. Plan a ritual for saying goodbye.
- In every project there should be a central attachment figure for the children. If there is no such person then speak to those in charge about it.

CASE STUDY 7: PARTIES

Situation of the intern: The person abroad got to know some tourists in the language school and went to a party with them. Even though the director gave him/her the following day off, he/she has the feeling that the team disapproves of his/her behaviour.



Question to the intern: WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE CASE?

Possible explanations:

- It is possibly difficult for the team to comprehend that you are not taking your work responsibilities seriously and that you are taking liberties that they do not have.
- Your behaviour can cast a negative light on the project or the organization in your homeland, as other people might draw the conclusion that work is not being carried out in a serious manner.

Question to the intern: WHAT COULD YOU DO IN THIS SITUATION?

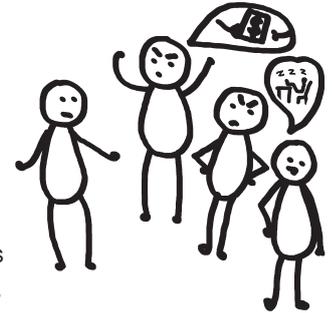
Suggestions:

- Be aware that you are not on holiday, that you carry responsibilities and that you have a function as a role model. Look at what your co-workers do and behave as they do.

CASE STUDY 8: GRIEVANCES FROM CO-WORKERS

Situation of the intern:

During a coffee break a co-worker told the person working abroad that she earns too little to make ends meet with five children to look after. The co-worker then asked the intern if he/she could ask the boss for a raise on her behalf. The co-worker also complained that the boss earns a high wage, although all he does is sit around in the office all day and nobody really knows exactly what he does.



Question to the intern:

WHY DO YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE MIGHT COMPLAIN TO YOU?

Possible explanations:

- Interns are in contact with the sponsor: due to this co-workers often falsely believe that interns also have an influence over how money is distributed.
- The director is responsible for tasks such as project planning, fundraising, reporting etc. These tasks are necessary in order to ensure that the project runs smoothly and they are very time-consuming.

Question to the intern:

WHAT COULD YOU DO IN THIS SITUATION?

Suggestions:

- It is not your place to intervene in the politics of what people get paid within an organization. Make that completely clear and suggest to the co-worker to approach the boss herself to ask for a raise.
- If you feel that something is really not right then you can get in contact with the organization which sent you there.

CASE STUDY 9: TRAVEL

Situation of the intern:

The person working abroad has organized with her boss to be free from work every Friday and every weekend. What she would most like to do during this time is to see and experience as much as possible. Accordingly she has planned to visit a different tourist attraction every weekend.

Question to the intern:

WHY MIGHT THIS BE PROBLEMATIC?

Possible explanations:

- Your co-workers might not be able to afford the time or the the money to make trips like these. If they see that you are constantly travelling around it could bring about a negative atmosphere.

Question to the intern:

WHAT COULD YOU DO IN THIS SITUATION?

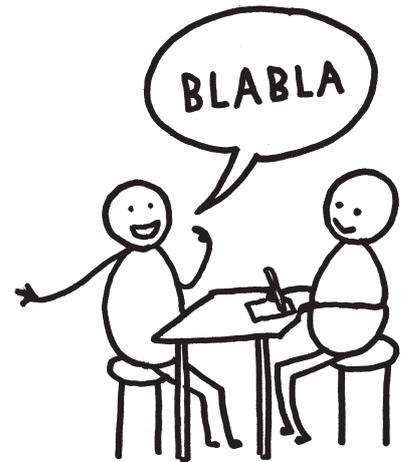
Suggestions:



- Even if your boss allows you to go off on trips it is advisable not to make longer trips during the internship.
- Try to integrate yourself into the local community and observe what the people from there do at weekends.

ROLE B: INTERN

Put yourself in the role of a person who is currently working abroad in the field of development work. Although you believed that you were very well prepared for what was ahead, you have been confronted with many difficult situations. By chance the director of the European organization which sent you on your internship is making a visit. You have already related to him/her the difficulties you have had to face by email and he/she has offered to have a meeting with you.



Prepare yourself for the meeting, putting yourself in the position of having experienced the situations mentioned below. Think of what the reasons might be for these situations and what solutions you could suggest.

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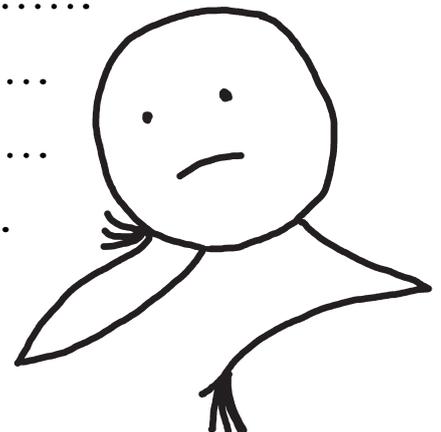
You arrived at the project 2 weeks ago. Nobody tells you exactly what you should do, despite the fact that you always ask. You feel useless and you are very frustrated.

WHY DO YOU THINK THAT NOBODY IS GIVING YOU CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS?
TRY TO PUT YOURSELF IN THE POSITION OF THE CO-WORKERS.

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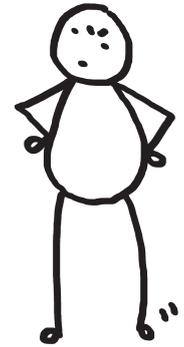
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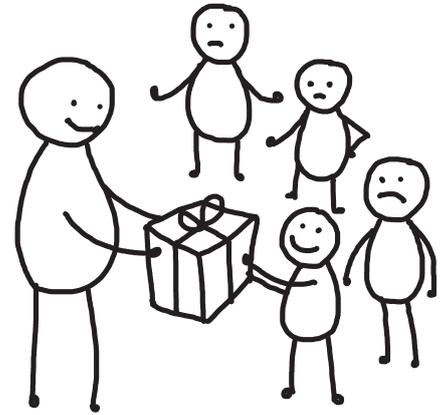
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LINKS & INFORMATION

FIELD REPORTS



Want to help someone? Shut up and listen!

Ernesto Sirotti proposes that the first step is to listen to the people you're trying to help, and tap into their own entrepreneurial spirit. (TED)

www.ted.com/talks/ernesto_sirotti_want_to_help_someone_shut_up_and_listen

