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RETHINKING INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Producing a volunteers' guidebook for a Moroccan NGO *Maison de Santé Albalsam*

ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this thesis is to produce a comprehensive guidebook for the future international volunteers of a Moroccan non-governmental organization, Maison de Santé Albalsam (MSA), that offers social counseling, health education and workshops for the local community in the city of Salé, north-western Morocco. This guidebook complements the orientation provided by the organization and will be sent to each new international volunteer by e-mail prior to their arrival.

The guidebook is a product that MSA had been planning for a long time. They have faced a variety of challenges with their international volunteers and interns. Therefore, they consider it essential to have the guidelines, policies, and procedures written down in the form of a guidebook, to avoid confusion and conflicts. Most of the problems between the international volunteers and the organization have originated from insufficient orientation, and poorly communicated policies. This guidebook is produced to benefit both the volunteers and the organization.

In addition, Maison de Santé Albalsam is seeking to attract more international volunteers from diverse backgrounds. This guidebook will be used for promotional purposes as well, since it includes clear descriptions about the organization and the volunteer program.

The production of the guidebook lasted three months, from March 2018 to June 2018. Background information, feedback, and suggestions were collected by interviewing the staff, and sending a survey to all of the past international volunteers. Based on the information gathered, the main challenges and developmental needs in the volunteer program were identified, and these served as the key focus points for writing the guidebook.

The end result is a 20-page book with the information written in both English and French. It includes information about the organization, volunteer program, accommodation, cultural etiquette, safety, rules, traveling in Morocco, the town Salé, the neighborhood El Oued, frequently asked questions, and English-Moroccan Arabic wordlist. The aim was achieved, and the guidebook is expected to serve its purpose and complement the orientation and management of MSA's international volunteers in the future.

Keywords: international volunteering, volunteer management, volunteer tourism, guidebook, Morocco, Salé, Maison de Santé Albalsam, orientation.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Volunteering abroad has become mainstream. However, the motivations to do it are all the more diverse: whether it is about experiencing a new culture, supporting a local community, learning a new language, boosting one's career, or simply having fun- the ultimate goal is to create a mutually beneficial experience for the volunteer and the host organization. It goes without saying that organizations must define, structure and manage their volunteer programs effectively in order to ensure successful volunteering missions. In this thesis, I am addressing the importance of proper volunteer management in international volunteer programs in the social work and community development field.

I have been volunteering abroad on four continents and noticed the strengths and weaknesses of the growing volunteer tourism industry. The most prevalent problem when it comes to international volunteering is, in my experience, poor management of the projects. The lack of proper orientation is a major cause for the projects to fail, because the volunteer simply does not know what is expected from them, and on the other hand the organization does not know the volunteer and their skills in advance. Organizations should ask for a lot of information from the new volunteer prior to their arrival and match the individual to a specific role. It is essential that the volunteer as well as the organization are suitably prepared (The Guardian, 2015). In this thesis, I will study what makes the management of a volunteering project successful and how social work organizations can ensure that their volunteer program is beneficial to all parties involved. I will also introduce some of the already established good practices in international volunteer management in the social work and community development field.

This is a product-based thesis. I seek to demonstrate how to develop volunteer management by writing a comprehensive guidebook for the upcoming international volunteers of a Moroccan non-governmental organization *Maison de Santé Albalsam* (MSA), an organization that focuses on improving the physical and mental wellbeing of a local community in the city of Salé in north-western Morocco. The production of the guidebook was my main task during my 3-

month internship in this organization. The internship was part of my studies at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences.

1.1 Aims and objectives

As described above, the focus of this thesis is the improvement of international volunteer management in the social work field, given that effective volunteer programs can create mutually beneficial relationships between the volunteer and the host organization. Conversely, poorly implemented programs can lead to divisive rifts (Unite for Sight, 2015). Therefore, the aims of the thesis are as follows:

- To shed light on the phenomenon that international volunteer programs rarely have a long-lasting positive impact on the local communities because of ineffective management
- To demonstrate how better management and orientation in the volunteer program can lead to a greater mutual benefit for the volunteer, the host organization and thus the community

I am setting the following objectives for this study to reach the aims presented above:

- Studying the good practices in international volunteer management
- Seeking to facilitate improvement in the volunteer management of Maison de Santé Albalsam by conducting a study about the developmental needs in their international volunteer program
- Based on these developmental needs, writing a volunteers' guidebook that will complement the volunteer orientation at MSA

To conclude, I am addressing the importance of effective volunteer management, demonstrating this by identifying the developmental needs in the volunteer management of MSA and based on these findings I write a practical guidebook for their future international volunteers. Hence, the guidebook will serve as a tool to improve the volunteer management in this organization.

1.2 Target group and stakeholders

I will proceed to introduce the primary stakeholders of this project, the organization Maison de Santé Albalsam, as well as their international volunteers and their connections to international volunteering programs. Secondary stakeholders in this project are the members of the community in which this project is conducted, namely the local people in Salé, and the organization's target population (Zarinpoush 2006, 5).

1.2.1 Maison de Santé Albalsam

Maison de Santé Albalsam (*Health Home Albalsam*) is a Moroccan non-governmental organization with its first site located in Salé, in a busy working-class neighborhood called *El Oued*. The organization was founded the 30th of August 2008, and its practices are based on the concept of *health homes* that has previously been established in France, Belgium, and Palestine among others. Maison de Santé Albalsam is the first and, for the time being, the only health home in Morocco. Global health is at the heart of its purpose. The team consists of professionals in the medical field (doctors, nurses, physiotherapists) as well as in the social field (project assistants, animators, social assistants, coaches).

MSA was created to respond to the growing need of proper health promotion and prevention in the country. There is no universal health coverage in Morocco. A big part of the population does not possess a medical insurance. People spend a major part of their income on health at the expense of other needs. Therefore, the prevention and promotion of a healthy lifestyle play a major role in allowing the population to maintain a good health. MSA combines medical, social, and educational services for the benefit of the local population and thus creates a dynamic of behavioral change and empowerment (Maison de Santé Albalsam, 2018).

MSA offers health promotion programs tailored to different target groups: children, pre-youth, youth, women, adults, and seniors. The activities they offer

include medical and paramedical consultations, health promotion sessions, personal development workshops, health program for youth, and community health workers' program, among others. MSA has recently included a library in their premises in Salé to encourage local young people to read more. Pedagogy and counselling are closely interrelated in their work. MSA is modeling all programs with the aim of setting up other health homes in Morocco. Partnerships for developing MSA programs in Southern Morocco are currently being established (Maison de Santé Albalsam, 2018).

1.2.2 International volunteers at MSA

Maison de Santé Albalsam receives international volunteers since 2015 to assist in various operations, such as animation of different classes (English and French with the focus on health thematic), project and event management, research, and administrative tasks. By June 2018, there had been 41 international volunteers from 3 nationalities: France, United States and Finland, the vast majority being from France. MSA has the interest to receive more volunteers from other countries as well to make the organization more international, and therefore they expressed the need to produce a comprehensive international volunteers' guidebook, written in both English and French (Maison de Santé Albalsam, 2018).

There are three different ways to volunteer at MSA: school internships, civic service, and general volunteering. MSA has conventions with different institutions, that, as mentioned before, are mainly from France. The biggest sender of international interns and volunteers has been La Guilde. It is a non-governmental organization based in Paris that connects European volunteers with NGOs all over the world. La Guilde offers three types of missions: short missions (1 week to 6 months), civic service, and international solidarity volunteers' programs.

Other main senders are IFF Europe, a private French college based in Angers that offers training programs in the humanitarian, social and developmental field. Lastly, ILCS volunteering program brings volunteers from the Institute for

Leadership and Communication Studies, a private college based in Rabat. ILCS does collaboration with International Volunteer HQ, that is the world's leading volunteer travel organization.

La Guilde has brought the most volunteers to MSA. The organization has experienced coordination problems with them, since La Guilde sends French student groups to volunteer and this has led to integration issues, when the groups spend all their time among themselves. The main objective of La Guilde is to offer solidarity travels and, according to MSA, the motivations for the missions are diverse and do not always coincide with the organization's aims. IFF Europe has been providing the most successful missions, since they adhere to the organization's regulation system. They have been well prepared to the missions beforehand, and their motivations usually meet the needs of MSA. ILCS has brought one successful mission, but the partnership ought to be developed in the future (Maison de Santé Albalsam, 2018).

In this thesis, I will focus on the challenges that both the organization and the past volunteers have experienced during their mission. These findings help me in the process of writing the international volunteers' guidebook for MSA.

2 BACKGROUND AND KEY CONCEPTS

In this chapter I will elaborate the key concepts used in the thesis, as well as introduce previous studies on challenges and good practices in volunteer management in the social work field. To begin with, it is essential to define what is meant by volunteer tourism and volunteer management, as these are the main themes of this research.

2.1 Volunteer tourism

Volunteer tourism is a rapidly growing trend in the tourism industry and it has recently started to gain interest as a research subject (Andereck, Gard McGehee, Lee & Clemmons 2011, 1). However, people have only relatively recently

started to question volunteer tourism's actual influences and there is only little systemic academic research in this field (Brown 2010, 480). Thus, books or research about exactly how to improve volunteer experiences for both the volunteer and the organization and the community are few.

Wearing's (2001, 1) definition of volunteer tourists is the most cited definition in the literature. He defines volunteer tourists as:

> "Tourists, who for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment".

A Finnish travelling website Rantapallo (2012) describes international voluntary projects as a chance to gain experiences that an "Average Joe" would not otherwise experience, while doing something meaningful. The site states that for those interested in the social work field there is a variety of tasks in teaching in schools or caretaking work in e.g. orphanages and institutions. The site states that "getting closer than this to local life will be difficult".

A lot of the criticism against volunteer tourism focuses on the notion that it benefits more the volunteer tourists than the local communities. However, it is not to blame the volunteer tourists but the poorly managed missions and programs (The Guardian, 2017). The most common reason for volunteers to leave an organization is poor management. This may seem surprising since substantial resources are being invested in recruiting volunteers, but organizations often end up breaking the psychological contract they have with their volunteers (ibid). Anni Vase argues (2015, 11) that volunteer tourists pay high amounts of money for volunteer programs and projects in order to help the locals but are often disappointed since they do not get the opportunity to do the projects that match their skills and interests, and sometimes the volunteers are not even needed after all.

2.2 Volunteer management

The rapid growth of the volunteer tourism industry has resulted in a need for proper guidelines for how to manage the international volunteer programs better (Vase 2015, 22). The key for longer term solutions and more positive cross-cultural exchange between the volunteer tourists and the host community is meeting the needs and expectations of both, the volunteer and the host community (Wearing and McGehee 2013, 126).

Effective management of volunteers is an important topic because volunteers are a major component of the workforce of many nonprofits. The service of volunteers is of enormous economic importance to many organizations and to society (Worth 2009, 197). The organizations that manage their volunteers most effectively, both in terms of lowest turnover and highest levels of satisfaction, share many key characteristics. They have a very strong sense of pride in their aims and achievements, while actively ensuring their volunteers feel part of that by recognizing and validating individual commitment and contributions. (The Guardian, 2017.) They motivate, engage, and assess all staff fairly, including volunteers: they treat volunteers' work professionally and do not place unfair demands upon them. Their websites are visual, easy to navigate and effective at communicating exactly what the expectations of volunteers are before recruitment. And lastly, they employ a volunteer manager, meaning that responsibility for all of the above lies with a member of staff. To conclude, these organizations put a lot of effort in establishing and maintaining an effective psychological contract with their volunteers (ibid.).

Increasingly, nonprofit groups are setting up volunteer programs to help them more effectively recruit, select, supervise, and reward volunteers. These groups have recognized that volunteers are a remarkable asset to their group and that they should focus on how to attract and keep this resource. Not many small-scale organizations have the possibility to hire a dedicated staff person to manage a volunteer program. Nonetheless, it is important to have someone, whether it be a volunteer, a staff person, a board member, or even a committee, to pay attention to volunteers and the structures that support them. (Ellis 2015, 37.)

When improving project management in international volunteer programs, it is good to find guidelines and practices that are already established to follow and use as references. An extensive guide to managing volunteers is *Best Practices in Volunteer Management* by Canada Volunteerism Initiative. They have defined different aspects of good management in volunteer programs, specifically for small nonprofit organizations. For this thesis, the most relevant ones of the "10 best practices" that they have defined are *Orienting and training volunteers*, *Defining rules and expectations*, *Supervision* and *volunteer guidebooks*; they can be applied in the production of the guidebook and improving MSA's volunteer management. I will present these in the following, as well as information from other relevant sources to support them.

2.2.1 Orienting and training volunteers

Regardless of the assignment, it is crucial for new volunteers to receive an orientation to introduce the organization's culture and work. Basic training may be provided to offer new volunteers relevant skills, knowledge, and job-related know-how. Once the volunteer settles down and is comfortable in performing the assigned tasks, further development and advancement can be sought (Unite for Sight, 2015). Successful volunteer orientation includes not only practical operational matters but also a discussion of the organization's mission, values, and culture (Worth 2009, 203).

Wearing (2001, 13) claims that in order to maximize the volunteer tourists' experience, the volunteer tourists need to be provided relevant educational information and material before, during and after their stay. All volunteers should get information on the history, mission, and structure of the organization. This way, the volunteers will know where they fit in and how they are contributing to the organization. Volunteers also need training and information related to their assignments. All volunteers should get the same orientation to the organization, but different training. Providing ongoing training to the volunteers will help them to stay motivated about their work (Ellis 2005, 83).

However, no matter how well the volunteer tourists are oriented, the volunteer project experience is not going to be successful without the volunteer's own contribution and commitment. Volunteers should do extensive research about the destination, organization, and the projects before deciding to take part. (Vase 2015, 28).

2.2.2 Defining rules and expectations

Volunteers may be unpaid, but they are a part of the organization's workforce. There should be formal policies that spell out the expectations, rules and standards by which volunteers will be evaluated and, if necessary, terminated (Worth 2009, 200). This is especially important regarding timekeeping, the completion of tasks, attendance, and attitude. Holding everyone to the same standards is essential, as this will help to ensure that both volunteers and paid staff value the work they do.

The policies of the organization define the boundaries of what is acceptable and what is not. This implies that there will be consequences if a policy is not followed. The first step in communicating policies and procedures is to make sure they are written in plain language. The next step is to make sure they are accessible to people. They should be written using plain, clear, and concise language. The statements should be put in the present tense and written with words that clearly direct what the group or people are supposed to do. It is really important to make sure all staff and volunteers understand the policies relevant to their jobs (Ellis 2005, 30).

At least once a year, the organization should collect feedback from staff and volunteers and review the policies. It is important to assess what each policy is meant to achieve and to evaluate if it is working or not (Ellis 2005, 31).

2.2.3 Supervision

Effective supervision is essentially about helping volunteers to get a good grasp on what they are doing, complimenting them when they are doing well, and offering them direction when they need it. It is about supporting the volunteers, so they can contribute effectively to the organization's needs, while also seeking to meet the volunteers' motivations for being there. Supervisor's role can be played by a staff person or another volunteer (Ellis 2005, 95).

The most important job of the supervisor is to ensure a two-way flow of communication with the volunteers for the whole time they are involved with the group. Volunteers should get regular feedback from their supervisor to help them improve their work and as a recognition of their contributions. The volunteers should be encouraged to provide feedback related to both their assignment as well as issues that affect the whole organization.

In addition to the ongoing giving and receiving of feedback, performance evaluations should be done for regular volunteers (ibid.). This is to check in to ensure that both the needs of the group and the volunteer are being met. The main purpose of this is not to judge the volunteers or their performance but to evaluate what has been achieved and what still needs to be done (or changed) (Brudney, 1999). Formal records of contribution, such as logs for volunteering hours, may be helpful to be used as metrics for evaluations. It is important for volunteers to feel that their efforts, unique talents, and personalities are making a difference (Unite for Sight, 2015).

2.2.4 Volunteer guidebooks

Guidebooks can be invaluable in several ways in volunteer programs. They force the organization to assess their entire volunteer program, identifying lacks in the recruitment, training, procedures, and recognition and dismissal policies. They are also great tools for keeping volunteers informed and engaged with the organization's mission and goals. Moreover, they can serve for promotional purposes and be a great way to develop positive brand identity

and add more volunteers and financial resources, thus increasing the non-profit's long-term sustainability in the community (Nonprofit Pro, 2017).

Volunteer guidebooks help to formalize the volunteer-organization relationship. It holds the organization accountable for providing adequate volunteer support. They can also facilitate the task of volunteer management and help develop a clear and consistent pattern of volunteer involvement (Unite for Sight, 2015).

3 PROJECT PLAN AND METHODS

As described, the output of my thesis is the guidebook for future international volunteers of Maison de Santé Albalsam. In the following, I will elaborate the need of the product and describe the product itself. I will then present the methods and the data collection process, and the schedule for the whole project of developing the guidebook. At the end of the chapter, I will explain the risks and considerations in this project.

3.1 The need of the product

When planning my internship at Maison de Santé Albalsam in February 2018, the managers asked me if I would be interested in writing a volunteers' guidebook in collaboration with them. They had been interested in producing a guidebook for a long time, but they had not had many English-speaking volunteers who could take on this kind of project. They had had a variety of issues with their international volunteers, so they had concluded that with a detailed, comprehensive volunteers' guidebook many of these issues could be avoided in the future. The guidebook would also serve for promotional purposes to attract more volunteers from more diverse backgrounds. I was eager to write the guidebook, so we decided that this would be my main task during my 3-month internship.

3.2 The product: Volunteers' guidebook

The guidebook's purpose is to allow MSA's future international volunteers to know essential information about the organization, the program, and the area, and prepare themselves for their volunteering experience prior to starting their mission. The guidebook is originally written in English, but it includes a French translation written by another volunteer as well, since the majority of the volunteers continue to be French. The length of the guidebook is 20 pages + appendix, and it includes pictures as well. The target group for the product is, therefore, future international volunteers and interns of MSA.

To write this guidebook I had to find out key information about the organization, e.g. background, aims, beneficiaries, operations, policies, location, and, most importantly, the challenges faced in the volunteer program. The book is meant to be as comprehensive as possible, and I had to consider how the information in it could offer a maximum benefit for the volunteers and the organization.

Table 1: Contents of the guidebook

1. Organizational information
2. International volunteer program
3. Accommodation
4. Transportation
5. The neighborhood *El Oued*
6. Safety
7. Dress code
8. The town *Salé*
9. Climate
10. Free-time and travel
11. Morocco: cultural etiquette
12. English - Moroccan Arabic wordlist
13. Contact information
14. Frequently asked questions

The guidebook benefits both MSA and the volunteers. MSA benefits from the guidebook, since the upcoming volunteers will take the time to become familiar with the organization and their own place in it before arriving to Morocco. They will understand the rules and expectations as well as their rights, and they do

not come as a surprise when they start their project. It saves time from MSA, since the volunteers receive a lot of the most important information at once. They do not have to respond individually to all volunteers about the same common concerns and questions. There will, of course, always be concerns but the majority of the common concerns are clarified in the guidebook.

The volunteers benefit from the guidebook because they have the opportunity to become familiar with the organization and the work, the neighborhood, living conditions and cultural etiquette before their arrival. They will feel less confused and more comfortable with starting their project and moving to a foreign country. They can contribute better when they are familiar with the organization and aware of its aims and challenges beforehand. They learn the policies and procedures and know what is expected of them and what are their rights as well; this will prevent conflicts between the volunteers and the organization.

3.3 Methods for developing the product

In order to improve the volunteer management of MSA and to collect the most relevant information for the guidebook, I aimed to identify the challenges that MSA had been experiencing with their international volunteers, as well as the challenges the volunteers had faced during their mission.

The methodology for this study is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The primary method used is six face-to-face semi-structured interviews for the workers of Maison de Santé Albalsam. A secondary method used is a questionnaire sent to 41 past international volunteers and interns of MSA. The interviews and the survey were conducted in March 2018.

By interviewing the staff at MSA I was able to identify the difficulties faced by the organization in the international volunteer management, and by sending a questionnaire to the past volunteers I could pinpoint the most common challenges encountered by the volunteers during their stay at MSA. As mentioned, the guidebook is aimed to benefit both parties, and therefore, answers from

staff and volunteers were needed. A complementary method used in the research was my own field observation during my 3-month internship at MSA.

The interview questions for the staff were focused on the challenges and developmental needs in the international volunteer program, since the aim is to improve the program and prevent the issues that had been recurring so far. The questionnaire sent to the past volunteers was focused on the information they received prior to their arrival, since I wanted to find out the ways in which the information in the guidebook could allow the new volunteers to start their project more confidently and comfortably. I planned all of the questions myself, based on what I found as relevant topics to consider.

3.4 Data collection

The interviews were conducted in 22.-23.3.2018 in two locations, Maison de Santé Albalsam in Salé, where the activities of the organization take place, and at Sabaa Consulting in Rabat, where the administration team of the organization works. At Sabaa Consulting, three interviews were conducted face-to-face, one worker at a time. The interviews lasted altogether 1,5 hours. The following day, a face-to-face group interview was conducted at Maison de Santé Albalsam, for three workers of MSA. The questions asked were the same as for the administration team (appendix 3). This interview lasted 40 minutes. There was no set time for the interviews. Two of the interviewees at MSA spoke only Arabic, so another worker who was fluent in both Arabic and English was the translator.

During the interviews, I took notes on my computer and cleaned the text from type errors right after the interviews. I did not take audio recordings, since the participants did not wish to be recorded; they wanted to allow free and open discussion and having a recorder might have hindered this aim. The goal of the interviews was to gain information and feedback on the successful and the challenging aspects of MSA's international volunteer program in order to develop and improve the organization's practices in the future.

The questionnaire for the past volunteers included seven questions about the information the volunteers received before and during their mission in order to find out what the orientation of the volunteers has been lacking and how it could be developed further (appendix 2). They were asked to evaluate the information they received about the arrival and stay, work, organization, neighborhood, living conditions, cultural etiquette, and free-time on the scale from 1 to 5 (1: would have needed more information, 5: received enough information). In addition to these, there were two open questions about their experience at MSA: *Other essential information that would have helped you in your mission and stay at MSA? Anything to add?* The survey was sent to 41 past volunteers by e-mail, and they had the possibility to reply either to a French or an English version of the same survey. There were altogether 18 respondents, all of whom replied to the French version of the questionnaire (appendix 1). To conclude, the key was essentially to find out how the guidebook could effectively complement the volunteer orientation and management of MSA.

The field observation was conducted before arrival and while at the MSA, during work as well as free-time. There was no strict observation protocol since I did not know what was to be expected during my internship. The focus points of the observation were on how the volunteers are managed, how I personally experienced the management of my mission and stay as well as different aspects in the work, the neighborhood and in the Moroccan culture in general. Although it was just a complementary method for this project, it was essential to provide my personal perspective on MSA's international volunteer program.

3.5 Schedule for the project

I divided the project into 5 different stages. The first one began as I started my internship at the MSA on 12.3.2018. The first stage was about gathering information by interviews, surveys, and own observation. Stage 2 started in mid-April and it was about writing down all the material and information gathered. New information was added along the way as the previous volunteers replied and shared their thoughts, and as own observation went further. Stage 3 took place from the end of May until mid-June and was about making sure the order

of the information is logical and easy to read, writing the page of contents, and working on the design together with a graphic designer. By this time, I also passed the guidebook to a volunteer translator, who was assigned to translate the book to French. Stage 4 took place in autumn 2018, and it is the assessment of the project and writing conclusions. Last stage is about finalizing the thesis and presenting it at Diaconia University in Helsinki in November 2018.

Table 2: Schedule for the project

Stage 1. March 2018	Stage 2. April 2018	Stage 3. May-June 2018	Stage 4. Sept.- Oct. 2018	Stage 5. November 2018
Data collection	Writing down the data	Finishing the guidebook	Assessment of the project	Finalizing the thesis
Interviews with the staff	Own observation	French translation	Conclusions	Presenting the thesis at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences
Survey sent to past and present volunteers	Collaboration with the staff on the guidebook	Design of the book		

3.6 Risks and considerations

In risk management, it is essential to establish a timely and accurate diagnosis of the possible risks. Often the problem is that the risks are cumulative by nature; if they are not solved as they come up, they recur. The changes in projects are caused by many different factors. The most dramatic changes in projects are usually caused by errors in the planning phase. When the project is poorly planned, it has fewer chances to succeed. On the other hand, the project can "mature"; the phenomena and the operational environment might not be the same as in the planning phase, so the action plan needs to be changed as well (Virtanen 2000, 142). Below, I present the risks and challenges that I took into consideration when planning and implementing this project.

My first concern was to have too few respondents in the survey. Surveys sent by e-mail are often neglected by the receivers due to lack of time or interest in

participating. This could lead to a situation where there is not enough information about the challenges the volunteers have faced. Had this been the case, I would not have been able to fully understand the issues to be addressed in the guidebook.

Lack of time for the project was a significant concern from the beginning. The production of the guidebook was to be finished within three months, from the data collection up until to the French translation and graphic design of the book. The guidebook was not my only task during my internship in Morocco; I also taught English and health thematic classes. Three months is a short time and had to be properly scheduled to ensure everything got done within the given timeframe.

Language barrier was a possible challenge. The interviews were done partly in French, partly in English. Some of the workers spoke only Arabic so there was a need for a translator, which might have affected the information received. The survey sent to past volunteers was in French. The translation of the replies brought some challenges regardless of my fluency in French.

The objectivity of the replies was an important consideration. The information gathered from the interviews with the MSA staff could be biased; they might not have wanted to answer completely directly to questions regarding the safety of the neighborhood, for example, to avoid scaring the future volunteers.

Conflicting schedules is always a challenge when collaborating with multiple people. The production of the guidebook was done in collaboration with the MSA staff and organizing meetings with them was sometimes challenging due to busy schedules. At the end of the process when the translators and a graphic designer were added to the equation, the scheduling of the project became even more complicated. Although I finished writing the guidebook on time, the graphic design was not finished by the time I left from MSA.

4 DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS FOR MSA'S VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

I will proceed to present the findings of the interviews, survey, and my own observation in this chapter. There are different sub-chapters for these findings based on different topics. I will discuss the interview and survey answers in these sub-chapters and add the remarks of my own observation at the end of each sub-chapter. The findings are focused on the challenges and the developmental needs of MSA's international volunteer program, and they provided the guidelines to what was especially essential to address and clarify in the guidebook.

4.1 Volunteer missions

When asking the staff about international volunteers' adaptation to their work at MSA, the general thoughts were positive. When it comes to their individual missions, some people come with a "colonialist attitude", thinking that there are some aspects in the culture that are inherently wrong and must be fixed. The experiences have been better with the people that come as a "blank page" and do not have presuppositions about the organization and the working environment.

Staff at MSA found the motivations of international volunteers to be fundamental for the success of their project. As well as the desire to give something back to society, motivations of volunteers may include making new friends, learning new skills, improving their resumes, or alleviating boredom, among others. It is essential for the nonprofit manager to understand these sometimes mixed motivations (Worth 2009, 198). MSA had experienced that people who come from an educational institution, such as interns from universities, are usually more motivated to follow through the process and they have a better structure for their mission. Volunteer tourists, on the other hand, have been problematic because their motivation might solely be to have fun and gain new experiences. Oftentimes, when everything is new and exciting, the work might not be

the priority for the volunteers. This sometimes leads to time management issues, and a worker at MSA expressed the need for making weekly schedules for each volunteer, since this helps to structure their mission.

Age plays a certain role in adapting to the work at MSA. A staff member pointed out that for the youngest volunteers there are too many "first-times"; first time traveling alone, first time working abroad, first time away from family for a long time… It might be overwhelming for some of the young volunteers. On the other hand, the organization had experienced issues with older volunteers, for example with a woman in her 60s who believed that because of her age she knows everything and can bring her solutions without negotiating them together with the staff.

Regarding the survey, four volunteers expressed the need to have more information about their own individual mission before starting their work at MSA, and the precise tasks that they were going to work on. One volunteer stated that she did not have a proper orientation to the work, the only orientation she received was from another volunteer who was leaving the organization when she arrived. The same volunteer was hoping a weekly session with the team, to assess what was done the previous week and what the schedule and the objectives for the following week would be.

When it comes to the French classes, the problem has been that there is no log or journal about the subjects that the previous volunteers have already gone through, therefore the new volunteers are clueless about the topics that the students already know, what are the challenges, what has not been covered yet and so on.

In my experience, it helped to have initially established a clear individual project. I have noticed this in my previous volunteering experiences as well; it is essential to hear the needs of the organization and based on their current needs plan together an individual mission that matches the volunteer's skills. It is crucial to have initiative and discipline when it comes to one's mission. To make clear schedules and follow them is the key. I agree with the volunteer who suggested the weekly follow-up and scheduling meetings, to make sure

the direction is right and that everything is being done correctly, objectives are being reached, and so on. Better structure for the procedures is needed, and this will be addressed in the guidebook.

4.2 Keys to success in volunteering at MSA

The staff at MSA experienced that people who specifically choose Morocco are the most successful in their missions, not the ones who are assigned to come to Morocco. One worker pointed out that the mission must suit the person from the beginning. In general, the staff at MSA values curiosity among the international volunteers. It is better to ask, not to expect or presuppose. Downfalls have been experienced among volunteers with a lot of presumptions and stereotypes about the work and the overall culture.

Since nearly all of the volunteers have been French, they have expected everyone automatically to speak French to them, and they have reported that there is a "language problem". This is a problematic mentality among the volunteers, since they see it as a problem and a barrier and do not actively seek ways to work around it, according to one staff member.

Another staff member reported the issue of demotivated volunteers, since when the volunteers lack motivation, the staff lacks motivation too and the results of the collaboration are poor. There must be a mutual motivation. Having initiative is experienced to be essential, as well as being mindful and considerate about the people around.

4.3 Confusion among volunteers

According to the staff, an aspect that continues to confuse the international volunteers is the communication with the paid workers; many volunteers have expressed an interest for Arabic classes. For this reason, they thought that it is essential to add a short wordlist in Moroccan Arabic in the guidebook, as well as to mention about the possibility to take Arabic classes.

Volunteers often experience a contradiction between their expectations and reality. The staff members stated that volunteers are not often clear about what they want for their mission. It has been experienced to be helpful to write down personal objectives beforehand. This is discussed to be implemented individually in everyone's mission. All of the procedures, and an example of a typical day at MSA should be clarified in the guidebook.

There is confusion about some intercultural aspects: what am I allowed to ask, say and do, and what not? The staff have experienced that keeping the first day only for discovery, and taking the first week slowly, observing and adapting to the new environment is a good idea.

The past volunteers experienced that the communication with the team was confusing. It was expressed that despite their efforts to communicate with the team without knowing the language, the team did not reciprocate this effort. One volunteer stated that even after working for three months at the MSA, she felt like she is not part of the team. Lack in the efforts to communicate from both sides has been experienced to be problematic.

I agree with the past volunteers about the communication. It would have been good to be able to communicate with the team, but it quickly turned out to be difficult since the local workers take distance from the international volunteers. There is a need for a plan or guidelines for the intercultural communication. Firstly, it is a good idea to include a wordlist of the most common expressions in Moroccan Arabic in the guidebook to get started with the conversation. Useful expressions should also be written down in a poster on the wall of the volunteers' home. Both parties – paid workers and volunteers – should be encouraged to seek ways to communicate with one another.

4.4 Moroccan culture

The staff had noticed that when it comes to clashes between the volunteers and Moroccan culture, foreigners have found it strange that locals speak with

loud voice; they think people are arguing although they are speaking about everyday topics. One worker stated that volunteers have often brought up the "woman status issue". Some volunteers have not respected the local dress-code; the neighborhood is conservative, so it is essential to wear modest clothes, not exposing knees, shoulders, or wearing lots of jewelry and flashy clothes. Volunteers must make the effort to wear appropriately. Suggestions for suitable clothing was agreed to be added in the guidebook.

Many volunteers have found it difficult to accept that smoking is not allowed in public, and if they want to smoke, they must go to a specific place.

Taking part in cultural events and customs is well appreciated. Volunteers who are curious and open to try different things related to Moroccan culture have made a very positive impression on the workers. There have been those who have participated in for example fasting for the month of Ramadan, and this has been highly respected among the workers. Highly disrespectful on the other hand have been experienced to be the ones who seek to challenge and question the local culture and religion. Certain sensitivity when it comes to dealing with differences in the culture must be highlighted.

One past volunteer expressed that she had been told not to talk about three topics; the king, religion and politics. She had, however, had good discussions with locals about the religion, and she pointed out that most things can be discussed in the right context and with sensitivity.

To me personally, the cultural shock was not extremely big since I have spent time in Morocco before and I know the culture quite well. However, the neighborhood where MSA is located is, as mentioned before, particularly traditional and conservative. Traveling in Morocco is completely different from living and working there. In Morocco there are some things that as a woman one simply should not do, for example go to cafés that are meant for men. In the neighborhood, we were advised not to go to the neighborhood cafés since they are all specifically meant for men to socialize, drink coffee and watch football in. It was decided that we include a list of "do's and don'ts" in the guidebook, to clarify what is acceptable and what isn't.

4.5 Neighborhood and safety

A staff member stated that most volunteers have adapted to the way of life in Salé and in the neighborhood *El Oued* and become comfortable during the first few days. Another worker said that some of them could not even go out of the house because of the fear of what might happen. She ensured that since the house is between a bank and a police office, the safety can be guaranteed. In the first week they do safety walks in the neighborhood, telling the volunteers about the places that are safe and the ones to avoid. About the issues regarding the safety of the volunteers, the staff told that nothing serious has happened to anyone. Following certain precautions helps, as well as minding the dress-code and avoiding wearing extensive jewelry to not stand out more than they already do.

Four of the respondents in the survey were hoping to have received more information about the neighborhood, safety, and transportation. One volunteer pointed out that it should be elaborated beforehand that one can go by taxi directly to Rabat, and the differences between the three types of taxis that one can use should be explained beforehand, as well as until what time the tram goes. One volunteer expressed that he would have liked to know how dangerous the area is and what kind of people live there.

I did not know anything about the neighborhood before arrival. It would have been helpful to know some information about the transportation beforehand. When it comes to safety, there is clearly a problem with the curfew. It is also difficult to define a curfew since in the end, it might be difficult for volunteers to follow it. MSA guarantees that it is safe to walk outside even until 21.30, however, I had once a threatening incident on the street at around 20.45. It cannot be ensured that it is safe to walk around in the evenings in the area. In the guidebook, there must be guidelines for the times one should avoid going out, and that time, in my opinion, would be after 8 pm. There should also be suggestions on what kind of safety precautions one should take especially in the evenings, e.g. not to carry valuables, consider covering hair with a scarf, taking the taxi as close to the volunteers' home as possible, walking fast and, for women, avoiding eye contact with men.

4.6 Accommodation and living conditions

The staff at MSA ensured that many volunteers have experienced the living conditions exceeding their expectations. The area where the volunteers' house is located is poor so the quality of the accommodation itself surprises many. On the other hand, although the quality of the accommodation is good, it is still simple, and some volunteers have complained about small details and expressed somewhat unrealistic ideas about how the accommodation should be improved.

There is a chef who prepares food for volunteers twice per day at the volunteers' home. Dietary needs have been sometimes difficult to manage, they should be informed and agreed well in advance. According to one staff member, it has been problematic that some volunteers do not realize that the house is not actually their own, but the organization's. Things break often, especially when there are many volunteers at the same time in the house, so the staff has considered putting a small fee for the broken objects.

This is the topic that was the most unclear to the past volunteers before coming, and of which they would have liked to receive more information. The information that they received prior to their arrival was clearly insufficient. One volunteer said that at first it was strange for her that people (cleaning ladies) enter her room, change the order and put things in different places. But she experienced this as a cultural difference, as Moroccans have different ideas about personal space, and got used to it.

In my opinion, the setup of the accommodation works quite well; there is privacy but at the same time a sense of community when the workers of the organization come to eat in the house. Volunteers' time is not being wasted on preparing food since the chef makes food twice a day for the workers and the volunteers. It should be clarified in the guidebook that the apartment is not actually the volunteers' own apartment and they cannot do whatever they like there; it belongs to the organization and is used by the workers of the organization on a daily basis. "House rules" ought to be established.

4.7 Rules and policies

When asking the staff about the rules that some volunteers have experienced hard to follow or have not followed, they stated that smoking and dress code have been the main ones. A volunteer recently invited local people to the volunteer's home and this is a red flag to MSA; if they allow someone to bring outsiders to the house, they need to let everyone do this and this will become a problem since all the volunteers must feel comfortable and safe in the house.

Some volunteers have experienced it strange that the staff at MSA are asking for information about their whereabouts during free-time and weekends. The organization has a certain responsibility over the volunteers, so they want to know where they spend their weekends, sometimes they ask for itineraries or phone numbers of people they travel with, to make sure they are safe.

One of the volunteers expressed that the rules should be better defined. There was especially confusion with the curfew and going out. Another volunteer stated the same thing, she told that the curfew has been defined differently for everyone; to some people it was said to be before sunset (6 pm), to some 10 pm. There has not been consistency with this, and it has confused the volunteers. One volunteer had invited two of her friends in the volunteer's home one weekend, and only afterwards she heard that it is strictly prohibited to invite people to the house.

I noticed that there is clearly an issue with the consistency of the rules. The rules are not shown or communicated to the volunteers on arrival. I did not know about any rules before I interviewed the staff about them, only then I found out that I am, for example, expected to send itineraries of my weekend-trips so that the staff can know where I spend my weekend. The rules ought to be clearly defined and communicated to all new volunteers in the guidebook.

4.8 Open feedback

When asking about positive remarks about the international volunteer program, a staff member said that they have gotten praise from the volunteers about a good volunteer program despite being a small organization, and that the volunteers' contribution at MSA is well valued. Many volunteers have loved the hospitality of Moroccans, and the country in general.

One staff member said that having international volunteers improves MSA's reputation in the neighborhood and learning languages with native speakers is highly appreciated in Morocco. International volunteers are needed because Moroccans are not motivated to volunteer in this neighborhood, since it is far, and the work is not easy.

Two past volunteers described their stay as an excellent experience and gave praise to the team and to MSA. There was one respondent who had extremely negative opinions about the organization and the experience in general. He told that he had experienced horrible and humiliating situations, and that he was left with no support or help. Another volunteer would have wanted more openness when it comes to new suggestions and ideas.

I see MSA as a small organization that has a great team and administration, excellent aims in developing the local community and a lot of initiative and creative ideas for improvement. They have a lot of motivation for growth. Given this wish for growth, the international volunteer program needs to be structured better, and there must be more consistency when it comes to the rules and expectations, and the overall management of the volunteers. When the international volunteer program is better defined and structured, it may well lead to development in their operations and activities as well.

I am content with the collaboration on this project with the stakeholders. I was able to identify the key challenges that have been present in the international volunteer program of Maison de Santé Albalsam. The replies of the staff and past volunteers gave me a structure to work with, and clear guidelines on which aspects to especially focus on in the production of the guidebook. Having the

book regularly revised by the staff helped me to effectively improve it and finish the writing within the planned timeframe.

5 ASSESSMENT

In this chapter I assess the project and the product and discuss the ethical principles that were taken into consideration. I elaborate the main challenges faced in the project. At the end of the chapter, I reflect on my own professional development. Recommendations and suggestions for further study that came up during this process are also introduced in the following.

5.1 Assessment of the project

There was a good justification for this project, great need from the stakeholders' side, and even greater motivation from my side. It helped that everyone involved was motivated to work on this project. The project was well planned and implemented, and I had chosen relevant methods to collect the information that I needed to start working on the guidebook. What I consider I could have had elaborated better, were the questions for the past volunteers. Since I had long individual interviews with the staff, and only a simple questionnaire sent to the past volunteers, I ended up in a situation where I had a lot more information from the workers than from the volunteers, and this could have affected the output as well. Skype interviews with past volunteers could have been beneficial. I relied on the volunteers to answer the open questions in the survey in more detail, but the majority left them unanswered altogether.

The collaboration between me and MSA on this guidebook was quite successful. We worked on the guidebook together on several occasions; we arranged meetings to regularly revise what I had been writing, and the staff gave me suggestions and new ideas to work on. In the end, the staff were happy with the content of the book. They thanked me various times for being collaborative and open to their suggestions and ideas.

However, even though I finished writing the guidebook on time, challenges came up with the graphic design. MSA has their own graphic designer, who was supposed to design the book, and this was expected to happen at the end of the three months given for this project. He did a first version of the design, but it turned out that there was essential information lacking for some reason; most importantly the page of contents, and contact information. The designer has still not finished the final version with these changes, and therefore, it has not been published yet, and could unfortunately not be attached to this thesis either.

5.2 Assessment of the product

The output, guidebook for future volunteers of MSA, was initially created to respond to the need of a better structured and managed international volunteering program at the MSA. Previously, the policies were not elaborated or communicated clearly to the volunteers which had led to misunderstandings and conflicts between the staff and the volunteers. Many of the volunteers did not know much about their stay and their individual mission beforehand. Therefore, MSA asked me to write this guidebook. These needs are now addressed in the form of a guidebook, which includes answers to the most common questions and concerns. Hence, I can conclude that the output turned out to be a comprehensive, helpful and practical guide, that helps the staff as well as the volunteers, exactly as I had planned it to do.

It is translated to French, but in the future, it could be translated to Arabic as well, so it could benefit the many Arabic-speakers who are interested in volunteering at the MSA.

The staff at the MSA thought it would be a good idea to make a short introductory video about the international volunteering program, based on the contents of the guidebook. This will be a good project for a future volunteer who is interested in video production.

5.3 Ethical principles

There were some ethical factors that had to be taken into consideration throughout this project. When collecting information from staff members and past volunteers, their anonymity had to be respected, hence the survey to past volunteers was anonymous, and there are no mentions of any names in this thesis. In addition, when taking photos for the guidebook, permissions to use people's pictures in the book had to be confirmed. Fortunately, MSA had a good collection of photos that they had already confirmed to be suitable for public use.

As mentioned, the guidebook was a collaboration between me and MSA. This was essential from the beginning of the project, since it had to be ensured that all the information is correct and relevant, therefore, the staff had to regularly check the validity of the information.

There was a distinctive cultural difference between the Finnish and Moroccan cultures regarding the contracts, permits and other formalities. MSA did not see it as necessary to write research permits or have any kind of formal agreements about the project. When asking them about these, they were amused and pointed out that "You are forgetting that we are in Morocco now" - referring to the fact that there is much more ambiguity when it comes to this kind of formalities in Morocco.

Copyright of the book was a topic that we nearly forgot to discuss with MSA. This came up only at the end of my internship, when I realized that my name is nowhere in the book. I was added at the end of the book as the author. I gave them the permission to add my e-mail address there as well, in case some future volunteers want to ask me for further information about the volunteer program.

5.4 Professional development

By implementing this project, I had the opportunity to improve a variety of practical skills, for example interviewing people, improving volunteer management practices, co-establishing rules and policies, making surveys, conducting a product-based research, and collaborative writing, among others.

Completing this project led me to find a full-time job as a volunteer activity coordinator in Helsinki. I now understand better what a successful volunteer management is about, and what the important factors in planning and implementing volunteer activities are. I have benefited enormously from this project, and I have confirmed that I want to continue working in the field of volunteer management in the future. I have understood the significance of a proper orientation and clear communication on policies and expectations, as well as the undeniable importance of validating and motivating the volunteers.

Lastly, this project thought me patience, since initial plans of the publishing schedule changed greatly. I had to accept the fact that plans change regardless of my own actions. Surprises and unexpected challenges come up, and that is the reality of working on a project that involves several actors.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the thesis was to shed light on the problems of ineffective volunteer management, and to study how better management and orientation in the volunteer program can lead to a greater mutual benefit for the volunteer, the host organization and the community. I demonstrated this by conducting a study on the developmental needs in the international volunteer program of a Moroccan non-governmental organization Maison de Santé Albalsam and based on the findings in the study I wrote a guidebook that serves as a practical tool for preparing volunteers for their mission and stay in Morocco, as well as communicates expectations and policies in a clear manner.

The guidebook was produced to respond to the need to avoid recurring conflicts with the international volunteers. For the most part, the problems had originated from a lack of well-defined procedures and policies, and insufficient orientation. By elaborating the challenges faced by MSA staff and volunteers, I was able to easily find out what the main topics to improve in their international volunteer program were.

Obviously, no guidebook can answer to all of the questions volunteers may have, but it undeniably complements the orientation provided by the organization, clarifies the most common questions and concerns, and prepares the volunteers for what they are signing up for. I am optimistic about its benefits for the organization and for their future volunteers.

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APPENDIX 1. Survey for the past international volunteers (French).

Questionnaire: Maison de Santé Albalsam

Veuillez évaluer les informations que vous avez reçues avant votre mission à la MSA, sur une échelle de 1 à 5 (1: j'aurais eu besoin de plus d'informations, 5: j'ai reçu suffisamment d'informations)

1. Informations concernant l'arrivée et le séjour à la MSA

2. Maison de Santé Albalsam
Histoire, objectifs, défis, principes

3. La maison des bénévolés "Almanzil"
L'hébergement, logistique, nourriture, quoi amener

4. Salé et le quartier "Al Oued"
Sécurité, transport, comment se déplacer

5. Maroc
Étiquette culturelle, faire / ne pas faire au Maroc

6. Votre propre mission à la MSA
Vos objectifs, votre horaire de travail

7. Temps libre, loisirs
Activités à faire durant le temps libre et les week-ends, voyager au Maroc

8. D'autres informations essentielles qui vous auraient aidé pour votre mission et votre temps à la MSA?

APPENDIX 2. Survey for the past volunteers (English).

Survey: International volunteers at Maison de Santé AlBalsam

Evaluate the information you received prior to your mission at MSA about the following topics (1: I would have needed more information, 5: I received enough information)

1. Information concerning arrival and stay at MSA

what was to be expected before arrival, on arrival and while at MSA

2. Maison de Santé AlBalsam

background, goals, challenges, principles

3. Volunteers' home Almanzil

Accommodation, food, what to pack / not to pack

4. Own mission at MSA

Your individual mission & work schedule

5. Salé and the neighborhood Al Oued

Safety, transportation, how to get around

6. Morocco

cultural etiquette, do's and don'ts in Morocco

7. Free-time and leisure

What to do during free-time and weekends, traveling in Morocco

8. Other essential information that would have helped you in your mission and stay at MSA?

Answer in your own words.

9. Anything to add?

APPENDIX 3. Questionnaire for the workers of MSA.

The missions

1. In general, how have the international volunteers adapted to the work at MSA?
2. What have been the most prevalent problems when it comes to their contribution at MSA?

Keys to success

3. What have seemed to be "success factors" for the integration of international volunteers?
4. What about hindering factors?

Confusion

5. Are there issues that continue to confuse international volunteers?
6. Are there things that must be cleared up again and again?

Culture

7. What kind of clashes have there been between the volunteers and Moroccan culture?
8. How have the volunteers adapted to the way of life in Salé and in El Oued?

Rules

9. Have there been issues regarding the safety of the volunteers?
10. Are there rules that some volunteers have experienced hard to follow/have not followed?