“Training course – how to better accompany volunteers in reintegrating their social environment after a long-term project”

Report of the study session held by

Youth Action for Peace

in co-operation with the

European Youth Centre

of the Council of Europe

24-29 September, 2006

European Youth Centre (EYC) Strasbourg, France

This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.
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Youth Action for Peace
Avenue du Parc Royal 3
B-1020 Brussels
Tel. +32 2 4789410 Fax. +32 2 4789432
www.yap.org
exchange-training@yap.org
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Executive Summary

This activity, organized by YAP, with the support of the Council of Europe, was designed for youth leaders and youth workers who are managing long term volunteering projects. It focuses on the work done by youth leaders in preparing long term volunteers for their volunteering experience all the way through helping them to re-integrate back into their social environment and organizations. The main aim of this training course was to train youth workers and youth leaders on how to better accompany volunteers, upon return, in re-integrating back into their social environment (local community, family, friends, work/school/university, etc) and help the volunteer to understand his/her role as an active citizen.

The developed training programme focused on:

- Understanding the different phases that a volunteer goes through during the voluntary experience including the preparation by the sending organization, pre-departure trainings, on-arrival trainings, mid term evaluation, follow up during the voluntary service, in addition to, the final evaluation by the hosting organisation and the sending organisation once the volunteer is back home.
- Methods for assessing the experience of the volunteer upon their return and facilitating their integration back into their social environment.
- Evaluating the role of the volunteer coordinator (the youth workers or youth leaders) who is considered a focal point in facilitating the re-integration of the volunteer
- Developing a know-how for accompanying volunteers upon their return home and the re-integration process back into their social environment
- Developing some of the volunteer coordinator (the youth workers or youth leaders) skills to allow him/her to better help the volunteer in his/her re-integration process.
- Presenting means for facilitating the reintegration of volunteers
- Offering the space and support for the volunteers, upon their return home, to become active members in their local organisation and their local community
- Designing a guidebook or a small manual to help other youth workers or youth leaders in dealing with similar situations

The work of Youth Action for Peace (YAP) is rooted in the commitment and engagement of young volunteers toward their peers to work for peace, active citizenship, and social inclusion in society. YAP
has been organizing and involved in long and short term volunteering since its creation in 1923. It has been involved in a number of initiatives and pilot projects focusing on volunteering as a way to help young people develop and grow. Over the past years there was a lot of work and effort focusing on developing trainings and preparatory meetings for long term volunteers before their departure and during their volunteering. Including the ones organized by the different National Agencies or through the Youth Programme where the main aspects revolve around dealing with new challenges, adjusting to new cultures, handling new social environments, and finding one's place in the new surrounding.

However, from our previous experience we observed that there is not enough focus, or material, directed to the volunteers once they are back from their volunteering experience to their home countries and social environments. This period, although not highlighted often enough in long term volunteering trainings, is one of the most important phases in the volunteering process. It is a phase where the volunteer is living within familiar surroundings yet may feel alienated or isolated because he/she has been away for a long period of time and needs time and space to re-adjust to old habits and surroundings. Realizing that people went on with their lives while the volunteer was away. It is when the volunteer observes changes in him/herself because of their experience while sees that everything/everyone else around him/her had remained the same.

During this activity the word “volunteers” referred to young people who have spent more than 6 months abroad, or more than 3 months if it relates to disadvantaged young people.
INTRODUCTION

Aims and Objectives

Based on our previous experience and realizing the need to highlight the importance of facilitating the reintegration of volunteers upon their return to their country, this training course was developed with the aim of training youth workers and leaders on how to better accompany volunteers upon return to their country and the reintegration process into their social environment.

The objectives of this training course were:

- To raise participant's awareness about the intercultural and personal development process that volunteers go through during their LTV.
- To explore the situation of the volunteers upon return at social level with their family, friends, school/university/work, feelings, etc.
- Explore support mechanisms to better accompany the volunteers in their reintegration process.
- Analyze and identify the needs of the person dealing with the volunteers.
- Develop skills needed to deal with the re-integration process.
- Introduce and discuss the concept of active citizenship and youth participation.
- Develop common guidelines for youth workers and youth leaders dealing with long term volunteers.

Profile of participants

This training course aimed at gathering around 25-30 youth workers or youth leaders who are:

- directly and actively dealing with volunteers (sending, hosting or coordinating);
- in charge, involved in or have experience in long term volunteering projects;
- preferably coming from local and independent NGOs focusing on practical local action and community development, peace, and inclusion issues;
- preferably working with long term volunteering projects and not only European Voluntary Service (EVS);
- able to work in English;
- and under the age of 30 years old (preferably)
Most of the participants were coming from countries of the Council of Europe or having signed the cultural convention. However, believing in the added value of the diversity of experiences and cultures non-European participants from Palestine and Nepal took part in this training. It is important to note, that although the participants were youth workers dealing with and preparing volunteers, a number of the participants were themselves returnees who were, in one way or another, still dealing with reintegration issues.

In their selection, the preparatory team considered gender balance, geographical representation and age. As well as the motivation of the applicant, their profile, experience, being a possible multiplier, and the expected input of the participant.

**Programme flow and main contents/issues discussed**

Considering the diverse profile of the participants in terms of experience and needs, the preparatory team designed the programme based on a step-by-step approach. These steps focused first on understanding the needs and experience of the volunteers, then on the needs and the role of the volunteer coordinator, and finally on methods and tools to facilitate the reintegration process of the volunteer in their community.

The training programme reflected the journey that the volunteers experience during their long term volunteering including motivation for volunteer; cultural shock and conflict management; identifying the needs of the volunteers upon their return back to their country and reintegration issues (personal development, fitting, new reality home, social changes, etc); the role of the volunteer coordinator (youth leader/youth worker); defining what does “accompanying” the volunteer mean; developing and identifying the skills of the volunteer coordinator such as outlining a strategy to assist the volunteers in their reintegration process; and promoting the role of the volunteers as active citizens in their local community and organizations.

The methodology used throughout the training varied between presentations, lectures, discussions in plenary, theatre performance and role play, group work, and individual reflections.

**Programme – Inputs and discussions**

During the course of this training the preparatory team designed the sessions in order to fulfil a number of objectives aiming at training youth workers and leaders on how to **better** accompany
volunteers upon return to their country and the *reintegration* process into their social environment. In order to accomplish this goal, each session aimed at addressing a specific phase of the volunteering experience. Thus, providing the group with a new skill, information, knowledge, or method that would assist them in their work with volunteers.

The preparatory team was composed of five people with different experiences, skills, and backgrounds. Their mixed, yet complementary, experience in working both locally and internationally, in being involved in hosting volunteers or preparing volunteers as well as their skills in training granted a diverse and dynamic style in running the sessions and fulfilling the needs of the participants. Each team member, including the Educational Advisor, took an active part in the design of the programme and the sessions. The aim, objectives and methodologies were discussed among the team members in order to optimize the experience of the participants and provide them with the most suitable best practices. In addition, an external lecturer from the Council of Europe was invited to give a presentation, accompanied by the Educational Advisor, on active citizenship, the concept of youth participation, the importance of reintegrating volunteers, and the value of the volunteer's experience in the society.

While designing the programme the team took into account the expectations and needs of the participants as they identified them in their application forms, as well as their background and experience in the field. However upon running the programme the team needed to make some adjustments based on the following observations:

- There is a pressing need to work on and develop material addressing the issue of reintegration of volunteers;
- Although the participants were youth workers with diverse experience in dealing with and preparing volunteers, a number of the participants were themselves returnees who were in some way still dealing with reintegration issues;
- The on the ground experience of the participants, the duration of their involvement in their organizations, as well as their roles and responsibilities within their organizations varied among the participants;
- There was a need to work and develop a number of skills such as communication, management and planning, debriefing, conflict management;
- Many of the participants wanted to focus on concrete methods on how to accompany the volunteers upon their return home but had not considered the follow-up during the volunteer's
period of voluntary service as part of the process of facilitating reintegration;

Therefore the team found it essential for the outcome of the training to adjust the programme in order to set a basic and minimum level of joint and shared information before proceeding with the main objectives of the training. They also worked on addressing the issue of reintegration of the volunteers 'before' the volunteer returns to their country and not only afterwards. Furthermore, the method of 'open space' was used to benefit from the diverse experience of some of the participants. In addition, the team gave the opportunity to creatively give a presentation of the different organizations by presenting their work and projects through a fashion show.

Over the course of the study sessions the team worked with the participants on answering a number of questions such as the number of people who had been themselves on a long term volunteering before, the number of people who lived abroad for more than 3-6 months outside the frame of volunteering, how many volunteers did you as a youth leader send abroad, and how many volunteers did your organisation host. These set of questions helped both the team and the participants to recognize the different levels, knowledge and experiences that were present. It was important to understand and go through the different stages that a volunteer is most likely to go through during his/her volunteering and stay abroad before, as a youth worker, starting to address the volunteer's needs, fears, and expectations.

“For this session the participants worked on their chart of optimistic/pessimistic and active/passive. The chart was to help the participants realize the actual status of the volunteer's feelings. The second chart that was presented was about the possible thoughts and behaviour of the volunteer/coordinator in case of unexpected situations. The third part of the part of the presentation was about the cultural and reverse cultural shock based on various research. This included a presentation on Marshal Rosenberg's non-violent communication theory. Some of the participants felt a bit disappointed about the results of the morning session but it was an important chance to learn a new approach and way of thinking. Some of the participants mentioned that it was very important for them that at the end of the training we create something concrete like the guidelines” based on a participant's report.

From this point we also looked at the roles and competences of the volunteer coordinator, what he/she need to know, need to do, and what type of skills they need to develop and acquire. This session included aspects on the role of the volunteer coordinator and tasks, skills required or desired for a volunteer coordinator, personal attributes and characteristics, as well as responsibilities.
Another two important elements in the study session was looking at the stage that a volunteer goes through when he/she comes back to their home country and the reverse cultural shock that they need to deal with. The stages discussed were Denial, defence, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Through these stages the volunteer needs to identify his/her needs towards the family, towards themselves, towards the society/system, towards their sending organization, towards their friends, and towards professional orientation.

In the end, both the preparatory team and the participants were satisfied with the achieved results as they fulfilled everyone's expectations and the overall objectives of the training. One of the objectives that was not fully realized is the guidebook (a small manual) to facilitate the work of volunteer coordinators in the reintegration of volunteers providing tools and background material. Although the general outline and some of the chapters are completed the final edition is still in process.

In the course of this training the following objectives were met:

- Understanding the importance of the different phases that a volunteer goes through during the voluntary experience including the preparation by the sending organization, pre-departure trainings, on-arrival trainings, mid term evaluation, follow up during the voluntary service, in addition to, the final evaluation by the hosting organisation and the sending organisation once the volunteer is back home.
- Presenting methods for assessing the experience of the volunteer upon their return and facilitating their integration back into their social environment.
- Evaluating the role of the volunteer coordinator (the youth workers or youth leaders) who is considered a focal point in facilitating the re-integration of the volunteer
- Sharing experiences and know-how for accompanying volunteers upon their return home and the reintegration process back into their social environment
- Providing some of the volunteer coordinator (the youth workers or youth leaders) needed skills to allow him/her to better help the volunteer in his/her re-integration process.
- Presenting means for facilitating the reintegration of volunteers
- Presenting ideas of possible opportunities for the volunteers, upon their return home, to become active members in their local organisation and their local community
- Designing a guidebook or a small manual to help other youth workers or youth leaders in dealing with similar situations (in process)

In the evaluation and in response to the question of what they learned through their participation in this
course. The participants answered:

- “I think I do feel more confident now to do the returnee’s session as I have some ideas about what to take into account and also some tools in order to assess or evaluate these aspects.”
- “I leaned a lot. I did not know anything about volunteerism and I started working in this job recently but now I learned from the experience of 22 people and the trainers who were involved in this activity. I really appreciate the sessions on communication and conflict management”
- “I can say that the role of the volunteer coordinator is very important to deal with the emotions, feelings of the volunteer and during these past days I now better understand the atmosphere of diversity and multiculturalism, working in a team and team dynamic, mapping the needs and expectations of the people”
- “It was important to learn and have ideas about follow up and group evaluation – thanks a lot for making it possible – very useful”
- “Multiplying and sharing my knowledge with my colleagues who already dealing or starting EVS on the importance of reintegration”
- “I have learned that the intangible issues are more important than tangible issues”.

Main outcomes of the study session

Most of the participants agreed that the main outcome for them was the new knowledge they gained as well as some of the best practices and tools on planning, conflict management, communication, and means to reinte grated volunteers. Although some participants were more focused on learning new tools to integrate the volunteers, the majority found the approach of the team in designing the programme and going through the different phases of volunteering quite useful and interactive providing both theory and know-how. The only limitation that both the participants and the team observed was that, due to time limitation, diversity of backgrounds and the amount of information that the team wanted to pass to the participants, it was not possible to give more focus to individual cases (country by country). Especially for the content of the manual, the participants needed to try out (practice) some of the tools they gained before contributing more to the design and content of the guidebook.

Recommendations, statements and learning points that were raised during this training

- Going back home after a long term volunteering experience is in many cases be more difficult than going to a foreign country or culture;
- There is a need for regular communication and follow up on the volunteer during his/her
volunteering experience and not only to focus on pre-departure training, on-arrival training and final evaluations;

- It is important that volunteers share their experiences with others;
- There are different volunteer experiences and reactions in reintegrating in the social environment such as those who easily re-socialize, those who are alienated, those who are rebellious, those who are proactive, and those who consider their volunteering an experience after which they need to get on with their lives 'business as usual';
- A volunteer coordinator can only try to facilitate the reintegration process of the volunteer but can't control all the other factors in the volunteer's life and social environment;
- The volunteer coordinator's good planning will help the volunteer to continue his/her activity and involvement in the community and in the organization;
- It is important in all trainings, follow up meetings and evaluations with the volunteers to address the issue of cultural difference, and provide means to deal with conflict management especially in terms of values or views of the world;
- Multicultural trainings provide a fertile ground for exchanging of new ideas and practices.

- The guidebook/manual/booklet is foreseen to provide and present tools for youth workers to facilitate their work with volunteers and the process of reintegration. The structure of the manual would be:
  - Introduction and aims of guidelines – what these guidelines present, who can use them, what can they be used for, and what kind of information can be found in them.
  - Definitions – defining the types of long term volunteering, volunteer coordinator/youth worker
  - Cultural sensitivity – this chapter will be about multiculturalism and working with people from different background including those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, migrants, or disabled young people.
  - Active citizenship – one of the main elements and advantages of volunteering is raising a sense of active citizenship as it allows young people to participant in the development of their community and therefore presents them with ownership and commitment to the work and responsibilities they take.
  - Looking at the stages the volunteer goes through before and after their volunteering experience
  - The role of the volunteer coordinator in reducing the cultural shock and helping the volunteers reintegrate in their community as well as promoting their experiences within
the local community (linking this to active citizenship)

- Competences and skills required for a volunteer coordinator tools for helping and facilitating volunteer integration
- good practices and examples of actives and projects
- background references/additional sources

Some of the main results for the organizers

- The need for background information and training material addressing the issue of volunteer reintegration;
- A need to develop a set of general guidelines to assist the volunteer coordinator in identifying the following: the needs of the volunteer, the skills he/she need to develop in order to better deal with volunteers, the role and responsibilities of the volunteer coordinator (youth worker or youth leader), and the overall cycle of the long term voluntary experience;
- Lack of human resource and full time (possibly paid) volunteer coordinator (youth worker or youth leader) is an issue in several countries;
- Most of the volunteer coordinators (youth worker or youth leader) in this training were themselves returnees and were trying to deal with reintegration issues while at the same time working on preparation of volunteers in their organizations, and this was challenging in some parts of the training;
- The diversity of the group in terms of experience, knowledge, skills and background, though challenging for the team in designing the training program, was utilized in sharing best practices and tips for ways to better support the volunteer during and after their long term volunteering.

Possible suggestions or recommendations for the Council of Europe

This training fulfilled its aim in training and empowering volunteer coordinators (youth leaders and youth workers) to develop their competencies and capacities to better train and accompany long term volunteers. Thus providing them with tools and means to further develop their skills and practices to involve volunteers upon their return to their country and present them with opportunities to be active citizens and multipliers in their community. Sharing of experiences and best practices from different countries and youth leaders/youth workers provided a fertile ground for new ideas that many participant will take home. Furthermore, information on active citizenship and the value, as well as the need, for volunteering were all elements in the success of this training. From all of the above we believe that more trainings and information sessions, on the local an/or regional levels, are definitely
needed and desired. Youth workers and youth leaders are in need for more information to present more opportunities and encourage young people to explore and learn more about the other cultures and countries.

**Follow-up activities**
For the time being there are no concrete follow up activities planned. Nevertheless, looking at the needs of youth workers and youth leaders YAP will consider developing further trainings, more focused and catered to the needs of young people, with some of the organizations that participated in this training and possibly with the support of the Council of Europe. The participants were also given a chance through the 'open space' method to have a session to exchange experiences, and develop bilateral projects.

The design of a guidebook to give tools for the youth workers to help the volunteers when they come back to their country after a long term volunteering experience. Including as well guidelines and background information, suggested readings, as well as best practices on issues such as:

- Pre-departure trainings
- On arrival trainings
- Mid term evaluations
- Final evaluation in the hosting organizations
- Final evaluation in sending organizations
- Skills and tools in communication, conflict managements, cooperation, coordination, monitoring, mentorship, follow-up, etc.

**Conclusion**
We would like to thank the Council of Europe for their support on different levels without which this training may not have reached as many participants from different countries. It is also important to highlight that the facilities provided by the Council, including the assistance of the Educational Advisor as well as the EYC team, supported the preparatory team in fulfilling the aim and objectives of this training course.
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<td>Fears, Needs, Contributions, Expectations Ground rules of the TC, Learning needs+learning contract</td>
<td>Experience in every country/culture Issues during the PDT What happens to a volunteer during his/her project? What changes/How does it change? ICL and the changes it makes</td>
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<td>Intercultural Evening</td>
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- Why should we develop guidelines?

The idea of developing common guidelines is to facilitate and support the work of youth organizations that are involved in long-term exchanges of volunteers when the volunteers return home after their stay abroad.

- Who should be involved in the design of the guidelines?

The guidelines are being developed mainly by volunteers’ coordinators and volunteers since they are also the beneficiaries of the handbook: volunteers because they are the ones t

- How should the guidelines look like?

From the point of view of content, the guidelines should focus mainly on the impact of the return of the volunteer to the local community. As far as the structure is concerned, it could contain the following major topics: cultural sensitivity, active citizenship, before/after the project, role and competences of the volunteer coordinator, good practices.

Each of these possible chapters should be structured as follows:
● A short introduction about the topic, setting the clear ground on what it means and why it is important to have it in the document
● Main aspects that are of concern and of relation to the reintegration process
● Conclusions
ANNEX 3

List of references

Most of the material used was based on the teams' experience and knowledge. The articles or books below were used for ideas, inspirations, and to provide the participants with reading material for their work.

Programme Evaluation and Assessment: Books on this topic

Articles/excerpts on this topic:
- **The Cost of a Volunteer**, 2003 report by the Grant maker Forum on Community and National Service reveals the level of infrastructure necessary for an organisation to effectively involve volunteers.
- **Inputs Matter**, 68-page PDF by the Charity Finance Directors Group in the UK, with an Appendix on "The Development of Recommendations on Valuing Volunteers"
- **Measuring Up** from Measuring Up: Assessment Tools for Volunteer Programs
- **A Note On Assessing Value**, from BEST OF ALL: The Quick Reference Guide To Effective Volunteer Involvement
- **The Socioeconomic Resource Statement** from What Counts
- **Volunteer Management Audit**, from the book Volunteer Management Audit

Free electronic books on this topic:
**The Impact of Investing in Volunteers**, by Ben Cairns and Romayne Hutchison from the Centre for Voluntary Action Research at Aston Business School (UK, 2006 - 40 pg. PDF)
**Measuring the Difference Volunteers Make:**
A Guide to Outcome Evaluation for Volunteer Programme Managers
by Melissa Eystad, Editor
With permission of the Minnesota Department of Human Services, this extremely useful 1997 guidebook (now out of print) is available free of charge in electronic form. (Thanks to Melissa Eystad of World Spirit Consulting for sharing this copy.)
**Seniors for Schools Effective Practices Guidebook: Section IX: Evaluation and Recordkeeping**
136-page PDF applicable to any setting, outlining the principles of programme evaluation and providing a wealth of sample questionnaires, data collection forms, and report formats.
**Volunteer Management Audit of the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement**
Though centred on assessing how Canadian agencies are applying their Code for Volunteer Involvement, much of this 90-page document is universally applicable and thought-provoking.

**W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook**
Excellent introduction to the why and how of programme evaluation, written to guide organizations in self-evaluation without an outside consultant. Includes the importance of volunteers as an information source and as users of the evaluation results. (116-page PDF)

**W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide**
A companion publication to the Evaluation Handbook above, this guide introduces a "programme logic model" – a picture of how your organisation does its work, to facilitate thinking, planning, and communications about programme objectives and actual accomplishments. The 72-page PDF integrates volunteers into the variables studied.

Websites with information on this topic:
Assessment Tools Comparison Chart
http://www.upstatealliancencp.org/assessmenttools/chart.php
Descriptions of existing tools for non-profit assessments, compiled by the Upstate Alliance for Non-profit Excellence.

Innovation Network Online Tools
http://www.innonet.org/

"My Workstation" suite of free online planning and evaluation tools for nonprofits.

**Investing in Volunteers Project** (UK)
http://www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk

Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for all organizations which involve volunteers in their work. The Standard enables organizations to comprehensively review their volunteer management, and also publicly demonstrates their commitment to volunteering.

**Measuring Performance**
http://hrca.ns.ca/volunteer/manual/section7/section7.htm

Chapter 7 of the Volunteer Manual from the Halifax Regional CAP Association (Canada)

**Mentoring.org Evaluation Resources**
http://www.mentoring.org/program_staff/index.php?cid=18

These resources are written with a mentoring programme in mind, but can give useful ideas for other settings.

**Online Evaluation Resource Library**
http://oerl.sri.com/index.html

This site, although not specific to the field of volunteerism, offers resources for professionals seeking to design, conduct, document, or review project evaluations.

**Outcome Measurement Resource Network**
http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes/library/pgmomres.cfm

United Way of America collection of free articles on many aspects of outcome measurement.

**Programme Management Evaluation**
http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/work/staffguide/evaluation.shtml

Student Staff Guide excerpt from the Swearer Centre at Brown University, including tips for getting feedback from volunteers and other participants.

VIVA - The Volunteer Investment and Value Audit
http://www.ivr.org.uk/vivahelpguide.htm

Description of VIVA, a measurement tool that assesses the 'outputs' of volunteer programme (the value of volunteers' time) in relation to the 'inputs' (the resources used to support the volunteers), from the Institute for Volunteering Research in the UK.

**Voluntary Sector Evaluation Research Project** (Canada)
http://www.cvsrd.org/eng/vserp/index.html

Canadian initiative to improve the capacity of voluntary organizations to assess their performance and communicate their effectiveness to their funders, stakeholders and the public.

**Relevant Hot Topic essays:**
- Universal Standards vs. Your Own Situation - Oct '03
- A Medal for Volunteer Service - How to Measure Success? - Sept '02
- Spring Cleaning: Take a Fresh Look at Your Volunteer Programme - May '02
- It's Time to Start Counting Volunteers Seriously - Dec '01
- Evaluating by Comparisons: Watch out for the Traps! - Aug '01
- Be Careful What We Wish For! The Cost-Benefit Analysis of Volunteering - Sept '00
- Mystifying Data: Can America's Promise Get Away with It? - July '99
### Annex 4  
**List of participants**

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<th>Mr/Ms</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Family Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<td>Ms</td>
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