



VOLUNTEERS
build-educate-change

Volunteer Re-Entry Packet



So, you have just returned from a life changing project with Be The Change Volunteers!

Now, it's back to life as usual. But it's really not that simple, is it? Something is different. You have just seen and experienced and felt so many new things. You may find yourself asking... what now, what next, what do I **do** with all **this**?

Well, first, those feelings and questions are totally normal. And, this packet has been designed to help you work through these questions from several different perspectives and provide you with some avenues and resources to find the best way for you to navigate your *'re-entry in the the real world'*.

Second, to be transparent, you will not *'find all the answers'* in this packet, but what you will find for sure is that the sacrifices you made to help **hand deliver hope** through the power of education have made you part of a new family - you are now a member of the **Changer Family**. So, when you have more questions, need more resources, or need to talk to someone who understands, we are here for you. Contact us anytime and a member of our leadership team will communicate directly with you as you re-enter, re-set, re-charge and hopefully repeat **Being The Change** with us again. info@BTCV.us



Common Personal Questions

- How do I incorporate my new perspectives, philosophies, and priorities into 'real life'?
 - First thing is...**Breathe**. You don't have to figure this out all at once. In fact, we don't advise that. Instead take time to really think about it, process it, and get perspective.
 - Emotions run very high after a BTCV trip. Keep this in mind as you think about when and how to have graceful conversations about your experience.
 - **Realistically** re-evaluate your 'real life' - it may be more meaningful and impactful to see if you can incorporate more local service into your routine, create venues to raise awareness for the cause you are passionate about, or join a local chapter or branch of an organization you want to support than to "give up your morning latte for charity".
- Why doesn't everyone want to hear my story?
 - A wise and seasoned non-profit leader with decades of experience once told us "your mission is not everyone's mission." Keep that in mind as you decide when and how to share.
- So, why should I share my Changer's story?
 - Because, it's a true story, it's a story of hope, it's a story of opportunity, and it's a story of love! Your story is the best way for people to learn about BTCV, our mission, and the communities we serve. Your story fosters support, growth, and sustainability. Your story is part of the ripple effect that drives real change.
- How should I share my story?
 - Sometimes, the way your story is received is about timing. Try organizing a time at your home to first share your story with friends, family, co-workers, neighbors and others who have shown interest already. This respects people's time and interests and makes it comfortable for you and them.
 - Create a 15-20 minute presentation about your project. Nobody, not even your mother, wants to sit through a 3-hour slide show detailing every part of what you did. Put together a succinct, focused presentation that tells the story in a 21st Century time frame – and, while it definitely should be a personal story, make sure to tell the story of the community and the mission - it will be more powerful, interesting, and effective, and you will get to present it more often and to more people.
 - Social media is a powerful way to share your story and we encourage you to use this tool to share pictures, experiences, and perspectives. Do remember though that social media is a bit like your front yard - if you wouldn't put it on a sign in your front yard or say it to a neighbor, probably best not to post it on social media.
 - Sharing your story with the right people matters more than sharing your story with the most people.
- Did I really make a difference?
 - **Yes!** Through our detailed application and analysis process, annual reporting system, site visits and BTCV Kids program, BTCV ensures sustainable impact on identified needs directly related to education.
 - The location you served in has an documented education opportunity gap. Sometimes that gap is very clear, other times you have to dig deeper to fully understand it. What we can promise you is that your engagement in the project - whether you were painting a wall, mixing cement, playing with kids, or learning the local culture - makes a difference in filling that gap.
 - Do you want to know for sure? Visit the school you worked at again to see the seeds of hope grow. We would love to have you join us on a site visit or check on the school as part of your next vacation.



Understanding and Communicating BTCV's Mission

- BTCV projects seem to vary quite a bit - some are really big and some seem smaller - what is at the core of the BTCV mission?
 - We believe that the opportunity for a quality education is a human right. So, the core of our mission is to identify unmet needs and opportunity gaps in education and then partner with local communities to improve their opportunities for a quality education. The needs and gaps differ from community to community, which may mean BTCV helps add desks to an existing classroom where students sit on the floor or work with the community to build bathrooms to keep teenage girls in school or partner to build a bridge from the village to the school so students and teachers can safely get to school during the rainy season or help to build a complete campus in phases. So, the core is ***find the gap, fill the gap together, and empower the community with sustainable solutions.***
- Will BTCV go back to the community where I volunteered?
 - **Yes!** From the very start of the application process, BTCV communicates with our community partners to determine a long term plan for communication, accountability, and sustainability, most often using our phased-building mechanism. We adjust the plan as needed through regular communication, our Return Partner Application process, and site visits. Communities provide annual reports and BTCV is committed to site visits every 5 years.
- How does BTCV strive for use of best practices when implementing our mission?
 - We extensively read and research best practices in the fields of development aid, education, NGO management, leadership and humanitarian missions.
 - We use a needs-analysis process including applications, interviews, reference checks, site visits, phased building, board of directors' reviews, third-party accounting, and annual reporting.
 - We engage our diverse international group of Advisory Council and Board members through consistent communication and open dialogue to stay on mission, maximize health of the organization, and continue to learn and apply best practices.
 - We hold true to our core values of ***transparency, accountability and integrity.***



What about the Community?

- What happens in the community after we leave?
 - BTCV maintains regular communication with our community partners, other community leaders, school leaders and/or our BTCV Kids.
 - Short term, BTCV follows up at least weekly until all components of the project and the financial accounting procedures are completed.
 - Long term, we collect annual reports and we send site evaluators to inspect projects in order to measure success, continue to resource our partners, and ensure project sustainability.
- How can I stay in touch with new friends from the community?
 - BTCV volunteers are welcome to set this up on an individual basis through social media, email, Whatsapp, etc.
 - We respectfully ask that you do not make financial commitments or send money or gifts to project partners, students, or community members separate from BTCV. This can create real problems for our local partners and project managers, despite your best intentions. This is definitely one way that “helping hurts”, which we have seen first-hand.
- What is the best way to help the project community?
 - Be an advocate for BTCV and the community by sharing your story (in the right ways). BTCV would love to help you do this well – contact us for resources and examples.
 - Return to the project. This is probably the best way to continue to help the community. Our presence at a project, specifically volunteers who return to the same project brings about a special energy around education that nothing else can. Many of these communities have had experiences with NGOs or groups who “never came back” and so when BTCV teams return, it is a powerful way to hand deliver hope and build relationships that result in long term effective change!



What about my Volunteer Team?

- What does it mean to be part of *The Changer Family*?
 - Once you volunteer with BTCV in any capacity, you are a member of *The Changer Family*. Contributing to hand delivered hope, seeing the power of education in real life, and giving to something so much bigger than yourself makes your part of a large and growing group of Changers – your new family. So, whether you're driving through the Midwest, traveling up the Atlantic coast, hiking in a southwestern desert, or vacationing abroad, you have family nearby now. Please reach out to find out where your Changer family is - at BTCV, we love to make connections for Changers to catch up for a meal, have a place to stay, take in the local sites together, network for a job, grad school, or internship, or just say hi and share your Changer stories with each other.
- How do I stay in touch with the volunteers I served with?
 - The simplest way is to reach out to those you connected with on a project through social media. BTCV creates a Facebook group page for each project, so you can keep connecting with the team and get updates there, and of course, you can make individual connections from using that resource as well.
 - If you do not use social media or wish to try to connect with a fellow volunteer in another way just contact us. BTCV cannot give out personal contact info without permission, but we will be happy to inquire for you and make connections when we can.
 - If there is a BTCV Chapter in your area – join in! Staying involved locally is a great way to keep connected to Changers and the communities we serve.
- Is it possible to volunteer with the same folks again?
 - **Yes!** In fact, many volunteers communicate to sign up for the same or new projects together many times. Just remember to coordinate this well in advance, as many teams fill up quickly.



- Articles by co-founders Jimi and Cristi Cook:
 - <http://www.bethechangevolunteers.org/columbiafavs-cooks.html>
- Book Recommendations
 - ***When Helping Hurts***, Steve Corbett, Brian Fikkert
 - ***Toxic Charity***, Robert Lupton
 - ***Creating Room to Read***, John Wood
 - ***The Hole in Our Gospel***, Richard Stearns
 - ***I am Malala***, Malala Yousafzai
- Podcast Recommendations
 - [Andy Stanley Leadership Podcast](#)
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