

DOCUMENTATION ON THE EVS IN EU AND AFRICAN COUNTRIES

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Documentation of the International Voluntary Service project between
EU and African Countries

September 2007 – June 2008



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1. Introduction

“The EVS Africa programme is an important step toward the sharing of knowledge and the mutual understanding of the commonalities and differences that should be embraced by Africa and the West” (Grace in Uganda).

In September 2007 the **Multilateral EVS Project in EU and African countries** started with 17 volunteers. This project is supported by the Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission and is organised and implemented by **ICYE – International Cultural Youth Exchange**. The young people – five from Africa and 12 from Europe – participated for nine months in social projects in Austria, Finland, UK, Italy and France from the European countries and Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda from Africa. This intercultural journey of living and working in another country and culture is of great cultural, educational and social impact, and creates a deeper understanding and respect for differences between people and cultures.

All the projects work within the frame of social inclusion. They aim to “include” marginalized people in society. For example some projects take care of children living and working in the streets, give them education and health support. Others work with refugees and immigrants providing them with information, educational programmes and housing. Other projects focus on orphans, the homeless, disabled or elderly people.

One special characteristic of this European Voluntary Service (EVS) project is the reciprocal exchange and mutual help on a trans-continental level, between developed and developing countries, between EU-member States and African countries. For the first time African EVS volunteers come to the EU. This reciprocal encounter offers for the group of volunteers as well as for the local communities a great opportunity for a better understanding and the inside-outside view of one’s culture.

This report is a tool to qualify and analyse this EVS project of Social Inclusion in European and African countries and its intercultural learning and non-formal educational impact. It includes the experience of the volunteers working and living in the different countries, evaluates the benefits of EVS (Chapter 4) and gives an input concerning the theme Social Inclusion (Chapter 2 and 6). Specific Examples of Social Inclusion and in particular social or political developments (Kenya, South Africa and Uganda) can be found in chapter 7 – 9. One of the projects received an evaluation visit from Barbara XXX of the European Commission, which is described by two Ghana based volunteers, Mara and Hanna.

The project started with a pre-departure training (chapter 3) held in Berlin with all the volunteers (apart from three Africans who didn’t get the visa) right before leaving to their host countries. This training focused on intercultural learning such as identity, cultural diversity, cultural adaptation process, communication, conflict resolution and the concept of volunteering.

To improve the contact among the volunteers during their EVS, an E-group mailing list was established. This enhanced regular inputs through emails.

Concluding the (official) project – the personal one will be of long-lasting impact – we all met again in June 2008 in Berlin to have a Final Evaluation meeting (Chapter 10). There we reflected on the different projects, exchanged and shared ideas and an experience of intercultural learning, social inclusion and project work and we prepared the coming home process.

We want to thank all the different actors in realising this EVS project. The European Commission for the grant and support, the partner organisations for organising and supporting the volunteers’ preparation and stay, the volunteers for their involvement, enthusiasm and sharing their experiences; and the international co-ordinating organisation ICYE International Office for the overall organisation!

2. Social Inclusion

Social exclusion is a worldwide problem. Many groups of people find obstacles that can be of social, economical, cultural, geographical, gender or age related or because of physical or mental disability. They are often called – politically correctly: “people with fewer opportunities”. To understand why this all happens would be beyond the scope of this essay. Principles of social cohesion, equity and fairness are threatened which lead into high unemployment rates, decrease of equality of opportunities (e.g. for education), racism, sexism, poverty, marginalisation and discrimination.

We all have examples in mind: People with HIV/AIDS, the young single mother with low or without income, the old woman who does not have enough money to live on, the young man who left school without an diploma, the drug addict, ethnic minority group (or even majority groups as in South Africa) and so on. Examples are in the hundreds and it is not easy where to stop and who else to mention.

Most vulnerable people often face a number of different insecurities in their lives, which at the same time can be compounded, for example:

unemployment, discrimination and isolation; or inadequate housing, health problems and inconsistent education and training. These people can feel an erosion of rights and responsibilities and can end up in a vicious circle. The basic social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights and responsibilities are undermined or under threat. For example, it is difficult to succeed at school if you face discrimination on a daily basis. Without a basic education how will you find a decent job? Without a decent job how will you afford adequate housing? When the confidence is broken and people do not understand your situation, it is very difficult to join in cultural or civil activities. In the end their compounding problems affect every part of a person's life.

Many institutions, civil and political organisations are aware of this problem and try to combat this situation by enhancing the social inclusion for more people. On one hand roots of exclusion are tried to be understood and the hostile conditions deleted or at least reduced. On the other “people with fewer opportunities” should get support to get out of their exclusion in an inclusive way by showing them respect, trust and security, helping them to participate and encouraging and developing their self-esteem and independence. All these key elements are important for the construction of self-worth and the confidence in one's ability to learn, make appropriate choices and decisions and respond effectively to changes. Ideally, the person should be the actor of her/his life in an inclusive way.

“Excluded young people are hard to reach and the more excluded they are the harder it is. Some of the barriers to people's inclusion are deep-rooted, long lasting and structural in society. Projects obviously cannot single-handedly eradicate poverty, unemployment, drug use, racism and xenophobia, educational underachievement, homelessness, abuse and neglect, youth crime or any of the other problems linked with people's social exclusion. But they can work with young people in informal settings, broadening their opportunities, providing new experiences and challenges, showing their faith in young people and bringing out of them what is best” (2003, Council of Europe, T-Kit on Social Inclusion).

One major issue is the wording. Everybody knows the sentence “He is not normal”, referring to a man with mental disabilities. But what is “normal”? Is a lesbian woman normal? Is a person of dark skin in Berlin normal? Is a person using glasses normal? ... To show respect, to build self-esteem and to include, already starts with the right word to refer to this person or group. Over the years more and more people have become more aware of the need for respectful wording; terms have changed or dropped completely or avoided. Some words just have been obviously derogatory (as “Nigger”; “Mongol” for downsyndrom), others were avoided for being insensitive or inaccurate as “the poor”, “the handicapped” or “the jobless”.



Often these words were not meant disrespectful but resulted in being so. In South Africa non-white persons are called “people previously disadvantaged”, in Finland people with disabilities are called “people with special needs”, “Gypsies” are called Roma or Sinti, in the US “Niggers” are called “Afro-Americans”. The most important thing is that we start to reflect on our wording and how important it is to show respect in how we call each other.

With this EU-Africa EVS project financed by the European Commission we try to provide more social inclusion. Young people travelling abroad will face a different environment and culture, will broaden their horizon and points of view for others' situation. All of the volunteers of this EVS project worked in a local organisation in their host country that is committed to social inclusion: Orphans, street children, capacity training for youngsters, youth clubs, HIV/AIDS, refugees, prostitutes, young mothers, elderly people, people with disabilities etc. In addition they all met situations of social exclusion or inclusion in daily life: through personal experiences by them (being a foreigner, being of different colour or gender) or by observing others in their surrounding. ICYE also did a training concentrating on inclusion (how to feel as a minority or majority, consequences for specific behaviour, dealing with power and security). In chapter seven we list examples of the volunteers with social inclusion during their Voluntary Service.



3. Pre-Departure Meeting



The EVS Project started with a pre-departure training in Berlin, on September 8 – 11 2007. 14 Volunteers took part and left to their host countries the day the training ended. During the meeting the volunteers' expectations and motivations were discussed. In addition information was given on the host projects and the EVS programme itself (e.g. EU, Youth in Action programme, health insurance, pocket money, support structure). Intercultural learning and dynamics, as well as constructive problem-solving methods were discussed. We did a special focus on the overall theme "Social inclusion". We conducted an exercise (from Betzafta "The Three Volunteers") and follow-up discussion on this topic which was very interesting and fruitful. We tried to link to the projects volunteers were planning to do. The group was very motivated and had a lively exchange of their experiences and view points.

Highlights of the Training:

Expectation of my EVS – hopes and fears:

The volunteers documented their thoughts, hopes, fears and expectation concerning their EVS and the stay abroad. Afterwards we had a discussion about the different aspects including topics such as gender and HIV/AIDS.

Examples of the main inputs:

Living and Accommodation: Hope to learn and understand "African Life"/different culture/different habits and customs; concerned about lack of privacy, hygiene, mosquitoes, safe food and weather (winter – tropical climate).

Culture and Language: Wish to learn a new language, to experience a new culture and to respect it; fear that language barrier interferes with the integration and that cultural misunderstandings could lead into conflicts.

Host project / Work: Hope to bring something important, positive and sustainable to the project that makes sense for its people, and to use this experience to benefit for the future plans; Worried about the language barrier, not to be needed and to have too high expectations (themselves or of the project-supervisor) and the question why an EVS volunteer rather than a local person.

Home: wish to receive visits and to be able to know one's country from a different angle by being abroad and coming back; fear of being home sick and not being understood when coming home.

Intercultural Learning:

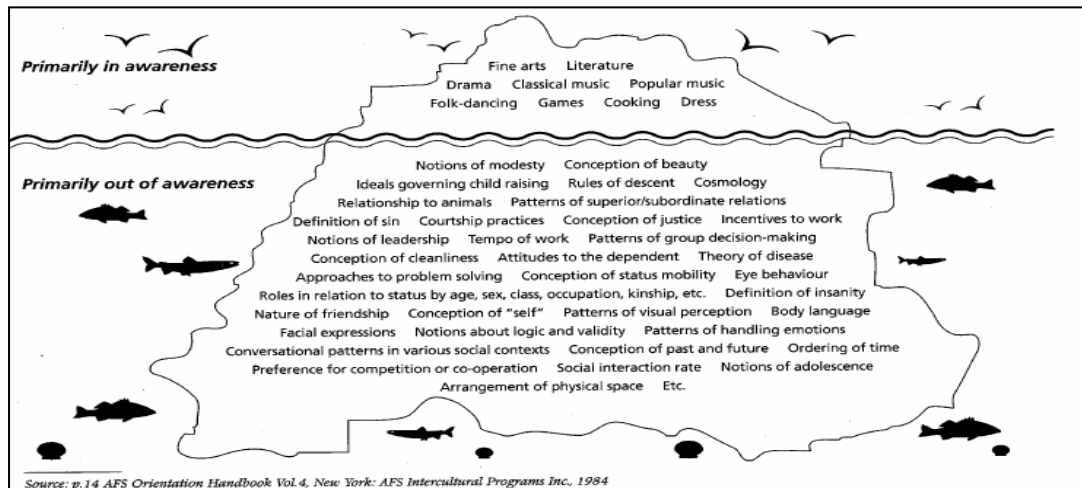
Circle Game: In two circles (an inner and outer one whereby two people were facing each other) the pax were given questions on prejudices, stereotypes and exclusion. The first person had one minute to answer while the other person could not say anything. This was then repeated with the other person getting one minute to talk. For the next question the outer circle turns to get new partners. Afterwards we had a group discussion on the situation of not talking and only listening and the topic of prejudice.

Home and Host country: First the volunteers presented one item that they take along with them when they travel. In the second step they were asked



to write down three things they would like to take with them abroad and three things they would like to leave behind. In the third step the volunteers made a drawing what they imagine their host country to be.

Values: The goal of this session is to reflect on different values and behaviours, prejudices, stereotypes. First the volunteers had to think about their own values and which are the most important for them. Then, in small groups they had to agree on a common pyramid of values (a ranking), without using mathematics. As the most important ones Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, Patience and Friendliness were named. In the end the results were discussed in plenary. The difficulty to negotiate and “value” values was highlighted. As a reference for diversity the iceberg model of culture was presented:



Dynamic problem solving: In every cultural setting you need an awareness of how conflicts can arise and how to be able to solve them. When being in a different (intercultural) environment this is even more difficult. Cross-cultural skills would be of great support: in small simulation games we discussed possible conflict situations of an EVS (at work, in social life, in their accommodation) and the possible ways out of the conflict: the importance of active listening, observation, communication skills, tolerance of differences, appreciation and learning the language were mentioned. In addition the support structure of mentors and the host organisation was also explained.



Social Inclusion:

To put a special focus on the theme of this EU-Africa EVS project “Social Inclusion” we exercised the Betzafta activity “The Three Volunteers”. The idea is to experience how someone feels in a minority / majority and what are the consequences for behaviour, integration, power and sensation of well-being.

While three “volunteers” leave the room, the rest of the group agrees on special symbols, wordings (for example *car* instead of *work*), taboos and gestures. They start a controversial discussion on a topic using the symbols, wordings and gestures they just agreed on. One by one the “volunteers” enter the room again. The discussion continues 20 min. The reflection and evaluation takes some 30 minutes with following questions: how do you behave in the different position? Did you try to integrate (the volunteers as well as the group)? How did you feel in the majority/minority? How did you deal with power? What is the connection to reality?

4. Experiences of the Voluntary Service

In this chapter the different experiences of the Voluntary Service and the stay abroad will be documented. Most of the inputs are taken from questionnaires, emails or statements (at the trainings) from the volunteers. They reflect the diversity of view points, encounters and personal feelings. In the same time they have something very important and uniting in common: to be somewhere where everything is completely different from home and the past daily life; starting with the skin colour, weather, food, noises, behaviour in the streets, reaction to newcomers, etc.

First Impressions

Here you can read some of the first impressions the volunteers had when they arrived in their host countries.

Tarek, Austrian Volunteer in Kenya

[..] I took a first mouthful of dirt, as I arrived that Tuesday morning during rush hour in Nairobi. It is strange to switch between two worlds just within a nap in a plane. Our vehicle found its way only slowly through the traffic jam. Enough time to watch the street traders, young guys running between the cars looking for windows to clean, and huge birds sitting in the trees as if the city has been their living environment for ages.

After a few days of seminar at the ICYE office I prepared to enter another world again: the countryside of Kenya. [...] There we learned the first African rule: Wait. Just for a minute! No, better two. Or so. We waited about two hours for the driver to pick us up. [...] I was taking a Matatu-Minibus from Downtown Nairobi to Kisii, which is in the western part of Kenya. If it says "Express" on the back of the car, they really mean it! Driving 100 km/h on an unpaved road made the two catholic sisters sitting next to me praying. After only two defects we were "almost" there. After another hour we were almost there, and 150 kilometres further we were the almost there. In Kisii, the two sisters stopped their preys and took care of my luggage saying "We won't move until you found your Mama!" Thank you again!! Finding my brand new African Mama was not difficult, because I had a very helpful hint: I should watch out for a "very dark person".

After a 12 hours drive, I arrived at my new home. A quite big house made of bricks. No water from the tap, no electricity. That's what I call a real experience, not so say an adventure. The area I am actually living in now is rich in rainfalls, so it is densely covered by vegetation. Exotic fruits like bananas, mangos, papayas only to name some grow everywhere. And when the sun disappears behind the smooth hills you certainly know, that this is the real Africa!

Milla, Finnish Volunteer in South Africa:

When Julie and I arrived in Cape Town, both the director of the Volunteer Centre and our supervisor were welcoming us at the airport. For the first three weeks we stayed at Red Cross Accommodation at the same building where our office was; a great and convenient possibility to explore the city better.

Already at the first day of our arrival I met most of my co-workers at the Volunteer Centre office. Although I was quite tired after the long flight it was nice to get introduced to my future co-workers and I think I'll never forget those friendly smiles I got on that day!

The afternoon after our arrival we spent with our supervisor. I can remember how tired I felt and also the question I couldn't really answer: what was the reason to come to Cape Town?

Isabel, Mozambican Volunteer in Finland:

[...] My first impression about Finnish people and Finland was good. [...] My arrival was fine. I just had the first cultural shock in the airport, normally in my country when we meet, we give two kisses. I wanted to give the man who came to pick me up two greeting kisses, but

he did not want. I felt bad. Then I arrived in my host project/ host family. I was shocked because I did not want to live in the countryside and also work there. It was hard for me. All the time I was alone. I was crying. For the first week I learnt about my project how to do things and also learnt few words in Finnish. I felt better.



Mara, Italian Volunteer in Ghana:

The first day started my orientation undertaken by the ICYE office; about my responsibilities, rights and duties. The day after I had my lessons of Twi, one of the official languages. It was a good moment to have a general idea about the place I started to live. I felt happy and uncomfortable together because I didn't have enough time to realize, before to leave my country what I was going to do.

Steward, British volunteer in Mozambique:

After a long and tiring journey we (myself and Emma Vepsa) finally arrived [...] in Maputo at around midday. The heat was almost unbearable having come from the cold of a Berlin winter yet the excitement of being in Africa was something very special. [...] We were driven to the AJUDE office in downtown Maputo but nothing had prepared me for the sights, sounds and sheer number of people that filled the streets and pavements. Coming with an open mind I wasn't sure what to expect yet that drive into town past some of the shanty towns that line the sides of the road was a real eye opener. I had expected a greater level of development, being so close to South Africa, yet the evident level of poverty and standard of basic infrastructures such as roads and houses was a shock. At this point a combination of jet lag, tiredness and shock had me worried about how I was going to be spending the next nine months!

Raimonda, Lithuanian Volunteer in Nigeria

[...] When I landed in Nigeria, got through the immigration office and found my luggage, I stepped out of the airport where I met a crowd of people staring at me. I supposed to meet one of my colleagues at the airport. I did not know how the person should look like, but logically thought that someone will be waiting for me with a sign with my name or the name of organisation. I could not see anything, so I started wondering around. Obviously lost white girl caught people's attention. Lots of strangers wanted to help me: some of them were offering taxi, others were asking what I was looking for and were offering help, the rest was trying to help to avoid first two groups. One young lady came up to me and instructed me to go back to airport EXIT and stay there. Then she asked me about the contacts of the people that were supposed to pick me up. When I gave her the cell phone number, she dialled right away and started to curse the person who picked up the phone: "Are you local? Do you know how it is dangerous for young white lady to stay here alone? I don't give a damn; bring your ass as quick as possible! I will wait with her till you come". Next minute another man came up to me. Maybe he was with the lady or maybe he was just another good will guy that cared about new coming persons. He told me he asked the airport security to watch me for a while till someone will pick me up. [...] After 20 minute or more some one came to me. My "body guards" did not let the guy to me, first of all they checked all his documents, then showed it to me and just when I confirmed, that I am with ICYE organisation and that the guy is the one, they let him to take care of me. It was strange that these good people disappeared before I said "thank you".

Hanna, Finnish volunteer in Ghana:

[...] Leaving from Finland, I felt to come very fast, and I didn't feel as prepared as I could have been. This must be one of the reasons why my first days felt in a way chaotic to me. It was like jumping into something totally opposite than all my previous life. Nothing what I read or heard could have prepared me for the dropping inside a totally different world. [...] And already during those first days I learnt the most important thing: patience to wait that the things WILL somehow come out because they ALWAYS will. And very fast I found my way to live in Ghana – and more I really felt in love with the country.

[...] We arrived in Africa two hours late; it was late in the evening and all dark. It had been raining, so the air was humid in a tropical way and it was HOT. At least it felt hot for me, stepping out of the aero plane, wearing shirts with long sleeves and a woollen jacket. [...] To be honest, the next morning on our way to the office, I kept thinking "I'll never ever survive in this country on my own; this is too much for me". I didn't understand anything, for example how the trotros worked (men shouting out of the windows and people getting in the car as if they knew where the car was going and how much to pay). [...]

My first weeks were confusing but great. In the beginning the feeling remained for some time that I could never survive on my own here. But then I started to learn how Ghana works and felt home. And as soon as I settled down, I realised what a beautiful country I had discovered. I really, REALLY appreciate the way how people live here - close to each other, without stress and hurry, caring about each other. I feel that I have found something more valuable than anything I ever learned in Finnish schools. [...]

Of course, during the first weeks I had to be embarrassed a couple of times about my stupid European way of thinking. The first week our cook told me she'd take me to the Market with her. I stupidly imagined a European kind of market, indoors, with cold shelves etc. And then we went to Madina Market anyway outside, with looooots of small shops and people and noise. I loved it, of course, but felt impossible to ever come there on my own without getting totally lost. And then of course, exactly one month later, I went there alone to shop plenty of things, and got everything without any problem. Just as I have learned to take trotros even for long ways with three changes of car.

**Grace, British Volunteer in Uganda:**

My first impression of the maze of Kampala was tremendously overwhelming, but it was equally exhilarating. Weaving through the bikes, cars and motorcycles on the capitals streets is like running a gauntlet, with people shouting '*Mzungu!*' (white person) and grabbing your hands to get your attention, and everybody everywhere is buying or selling something. The noise of music, laughter and barter mingles with the smell of sweat and popcorn kicked up in the dust. The lights of traffic, the stalls surrounding the crowded taxi park, and the general chaos of the city at night make it feel like a tumbling fairground after dark.

Cultural adaptation process:

"I really, REALLY appreciate the way how people live here - close to each other, without stress and hurry, caring about each other. I feel that I have found something more valuable than anything I ever earned in Finnish school" (Hanna in Ghana).

Spending time in another country and a different cultural environment leads, especially for long-term-stays, to a cultural adaptation process. Typical is a special curve of adaptation. The first stages of the "honeymoon phase" lead to an enthusiastic first encounter with all new things and experiences. Everything is exciting, new and interesting. This stage is mostly followed by the "disillusionment phase" in which the person is still not part of the whole environment, but things are not exciting and new anymore. One can easily feel irritated, sad and incompetent. Comparisons with one's country and stereotypes can come into play. The last stage is typically the "Understanding" and the "Integration phase" where one has grown accustomed to the new culture and is starting to follow the way of life as the locals do and to find his/her own position.

From the statements you can see the importance of knowing the (local) language to be able to participate and interact in daily life, to communicate and to express one's thoughts. Most of the volunteers mentioned the colour of the skin as an obstacle of adaptation/integration. All of these young people were in the situation of a minority of skin-colour-group which for most of them was a totally new experience. This can be expressed e.g. by people staring at you, racism, and/or expectation of being rich, powerful and money-giving or on the other hand being a prostitute, poor or a drug dealer. This daily sensation is often connected to stereotypes the locals might have of foreigners.

Another big issue in this adaptation process is to get familiar with the communication rules, the different concepts of time management and efficiency as well as the daily life organisation.

Many participants experienced kind of culture shock in the beginning. But all mentioned that, finally, they felt integrated in society and life, being familiar with the customs and local rules, traffic, food, working methods and found friends. Some mentioned that from that stage on, time appeared to fly.

In particular you can read about these experiences in the following pages:

Tarek, Austrian volunteer in Kenya:

I only had anxieties, excitement in the very first week before and when arriving in my host country. Thanks to my host family which helped me in many ways it was easy for me to adapt to the new situation.

Milla, Finnish Volunteer in South Africa:

Sure I experienced a culture shock! Sometimes everything was just too 'South African' to me and for a while I just wanted to go back home and get back to that 'very well organised life'. Even now there are moments when the African way of doing things is sometimes frustrating, sometimes exciting! [...]

I think I have adapted quite well – there are things that have changed in my life because of all the things I have experienced here; but I've also noticed what I am willing to keep.

South Africa is anyway full of different things; in some parts of Cape Town you feel like you'd be in Europe and in some other parts the reality is just so different! There are also people with different habits & values – I cannot say I have adapted to the whole South African culture in all its diversity but at least I've seen and lived some parts of it. [...]

I think that during the last months my feelings have been quite steady. I am not feeling very excited but also not very scared – I just feel fine. Because of the choices that I have made me also feel more relaxed, especially in areas where I am often or when I am out with my sisters.

Isabel, Mozambican Volunteer in Finland:

After three months many things changed to me because in the first weeks everything was new and strange at the same time. I experienced cultural shock. With so many things for the first days, first moments I had some shocks: how people behave, with food and some other things. The beginning was hard. When I came I was ready for everything almost. [...] I was trying to understand things. I think I have never seen so different people in my life like here.

Mara, Italian volunteer in Ghana:

I was never been shocked, even, if it's possible to see things here, my eyes never used to see. Maybe this wasn't a shock because before to come to Ghana, I spent more than forty days in another African country. I want to learn what is impossible to plan to learn: the human differences that don't belong only to a place but those differences that cross the world. [...] The excitement was not in me from the beginning. I arrived in Ghana, in my host project with more determination to work than excitement, but anyway after some time I felt different from the first time because I felt more comfortable and accepted from the community. [...] I felt totally integrated and beloved from a lot of people.

**Steward, British volunteer in Mozambique:**

Working with Mozambicans has been a steep learning curve. Whilst well meaning and kind it is often hard to get information from people who you know have the information but do not want to share it or think it is important. As such a lot of time and effort can be wasted. Apparently it is because I am asking the wrong questions! [...]

Yes, I believe I have adapted well to the local culture and customs. I very much enjoy living here in Maputo with Mozambicans and the local beer is great! Unfortunately I seem to be linguistically challenged and as such have not picked up the language as well as some other volunteers. However, I have learnt enough to hold basic conversations and enjoy the game of charades that often ensues. [...] Despite many challenges I thoroughly enjoyed learning and adapting to a completely different way of life. By the end, Maputo and Mozambique very much felt like home and I thoroughly enjoyed interacting.

Apprehension, fear and an impatience of just wanting to get on with things and explore the city were my principle feelings at the beginning. Also, excitement at the immense differences from what I was used to and realising that this really was an incredible experience. At the end everything was totally normal and things that had shocked me before I didn't even register. Maputo felt like home and I was totally comfortable there.

Omowunmi, Nigerian volunteer in Italy:

I am still struggling to learn the language, because it's a very technical language and different from the rules of English. I could say it's getting better each day for me.

[...] Initially when I got here, the weather was too cold for me, and I could not cope, but later I got used to it, and now that its spring, its getting better, although it still snows on the mountains, because I live up north.

[...] During the early stage of my project, adaptation was very difficult, because everything was strange, and I was doing more of watching than talking. I was trying to learn the language and along side study the acceptable norms expected of me in the new environment I was. In some situation, I would really feel like talking and giving my opinion about some situations, but because of the gap in language, I just try to express myself to the extent at

which I can. Now that I can speak the language a little bit, I feel more excited, and could work much more than the initial stage, when I could not speak nor understand anything.

Raimonda, Lithuanian volunteer in Nigeria:

[...] People were telling me that I adapted well to Nigeria. But still I couldn't stand the traffic, African time and that "white skin" means "money". I never felt that Nigeria is my home, but I felt good knowing that I could live there because I was able to discover all these little things in daily life which you need to know if you want to be part of society. People who knew me were saying "don't look at her skin colour; she is more Nigerian than you".

Julie, French Volunteer in South Africa:

[...] Three of the staff members, including me, have to do some shopping for the needs of the Volunteer Centre. I think: "Let's split and attribute each of us one of the things that are on the list so that we save time and are more efficient". My colleagues think: "Let's enjoy the time together and do everything together!" In general, I am always in a hurry, willing to save time and try to be as efficient as possible, whereas my colleagues are almost never in a rush and what they call "in a moment" seems like an eternity to me! Even when we walk together, I find it extremely slow, almost unbearably slow!

[...] One day, we were waiting for him [a friend], the whole morning. We kept calling him and he kept saying "I'm coming just now". To us, it meant in a few minutes, but in "South African", this means "any time, possibly not ever". Not knowing this, we've been waiting for him the whole day! And he was annoyed by us, since he had told us "just now" he thought we knew it could be any time in the day, so why were we calling him every hour?! [...]

In fact, in order to stop being disappointed by people, I decided to, first, take for granted that everything needs much longer time than we're used to, so we must plan a lot in advance, and secondly to never expect things to work from the first time so that we are happy when things do! [...] I also understand that the context and all the ordeals that the previously disadvantaged people (as we call the people who were discriminated by the Apartheid regime) are going through that are sometimes making them unable to arrive on time or keep their promises.

[...] Another thing I have noticed is that since South Africa has the same infrastructures as developed countries, almost the same way of life, especially in Cape Town which is quite European looking, we, as Europeans, tend to be expecting the same things as in our society, in almost all realms; and this is why the cultural shock in SA is more perfidious. There is one, but you don't recognize it as such because you have all your landmarks from your own society. So at some point you wonder what's wrong, but it's hard to define it. It's actually a cultural shock that you haven't been able to identify because of those similarities with your own society.

Mandela said "Speak to a man with a language he understands, it will go to his head; speak to a man in his language, it will go to his heart!" And he is so true! The Xhosa people don't expect white people to speak their language at all. So when we do, we are so warmly welcome! They smile, laugh and start interacting with us in such a friendly way! This changes the whole perspective of the stay!

[May:] I was finally feeling home. I had finally settled down. And from this very time, time just flew! I took advantage of every week end, and week days actually, to spend time with South African and foreign friends I met here. All my fears had disappeared. I didn't feel unsafe anymore.

Hope, Ugandan volunteer in UK:

I was actually home sick somewhere between the last three months. I guess it is because all the excitement had warm out. I had visited all the places I wanted to go and I felt like I just

wanted to go home. Unlike the first weeks where being away from home was not much of an issue as long as I could talk to them over phone. However, in the last month, I started excitedly counting down the days to go and aimed of completing all the work that I had to do and achieved what ever I had set myself to do. [...]

Anna-Karin, Swedish volunteer in Uganda:

[...] It doesn't feel like time goes when you don't have seasons, something I never thought I'd miss. [...]

When I first arrived I thought I had all the time in the world but these last few months I realised time flies and there were still so much I wanted to do. I did start to spend my time more carefully; I spent more time with my friends and with the children and finished work I've started and things I've been meaning to do. But I also started to worry about life after Uganda, finding a job I'm happy with and somewhere to live. [...] I feel I got pretty well integrated in to the local community, as well as expected. I got on well with my co-workers and made many new friends among the Ugandans. But on one level you are always the mzungu [white person]; no matter how long you have lived there.



Elisa, Italian volunteer in Kenya:

[...] I thought it was important at the beginning to know the pupils, the teachers and in general the community of the slum but I didn't want to force them to accept me; I preferred a slow change. I know the problem is the colour of my skin!!!



[May: ...] I am really tired feeling my self like a lion or giraffe that everybody is looking at! It is so irritating to hear 100 times per day: "Mzungu, how are you?" from children's choir. But, from now, I know that I'll be missing that and the people and the whole experience that I lived here. [...] I was able to create friendships with local people and volunteers from other countries. This had helped me to feel good and not alone. I don't know if I got true friends, but I really spent good times with them, we had nice ideas, exchanges and in the difficult moments I found

support from them. This point was important in the first part of my experience, when often I felt my self unimportant and useless. Also walking alone in the slum or in the city, helped me getting independent and not feeling as a foreigner in a big city like Nairobi. I truly tried to fit and adapt my self in every contest and I feel I did that.

Prisca, Kenyan volunteer in Austria:

My feelings have greatly changed since the beginning. At first I did not like it at all because I was a minority but now I am very confident when I walk on the streets and I can basically use the local language to express myself which has really helped. I am able to quite understand what is going on around me and that is very important unlike in the beginning. [...] I think I have adapted quite well to some aspects of the Austrian culture. For example I now can at least try to sample of the food e.g. Apfel Strudel.

Hanna, Finnish Volunteer in Ghana:

[...] However my feelings changed again after two month. During my third month I found some things in the every day life that felt difficult and hard to bare. Many times I longed for a break (like a weekend or week) in Finland. I know this is part of the cultural shock process



and is part of the adjusting process to feel difficult at some point when staying in another culture long-term. So even if I was exhausted I wasn't really worried about myself and as I expected, later things start to go smoother again.

[...] I feel I have adapted to the culture quite well. I have learnt the routines that are very different from my life in Europe and most important of all I learnt a lot about seeing why things are like this here: why everything works like it does in every day. I have still a lot to learn and I am all the time trying to find more

ways to adjust my europantiy to the local life.

In den end I was more tired and bored with the difficulties. [...] I wanted to go home from the house. [...] But than I travelled, so I was excited in a different way than before about seeing and experiencing the whole Ghana. I felt now I'm really INSIDE the country.

Signe, Danish volunteer in Nigeria:

I felt that I could walk freely in the streets and nothing exciting or scaring me as in the beginning. [...] I think I have adapted to the culture. I learnt to live by the rules in Nigeria.

Grace, British Volunteer in Uganda:

Before long I stopped responding to people who would shout to me on the street, realizing that I would simply not get anywhere if I stopped for everyone who wanted to talk! Now I walk on or nod politely without losing pace. The children who sit unaccompanied for hours, crying in the dust, who have learnt to beg before they can walk no longer move me close to tears. I have learnt to ignore their pleading eyes and outstretched hands and hope that the practical work I do will be of more use than unsubstantial and unsustainable handouts.

As I have learnt to deal with the differences in infrastructure and culture and the alarming poverty in Uganda, those around me have also needed to challenge their stereotypes of the 'White Westerner'. This stereotype is something that touches everything I do here and is something I find extremely difficult, even now, four months into the programme. People who initially believed that I was their route out of Uganda or poverty have had to re-evaluate their expectations of me. [...]

I have learnt how clear communication and honesty balanced with careful diplomacy is a vital component of living amongst another culture if one is to avoid misunderstandings, although this is sometimes difficult to maintain in situations in which there are language barriers and such societal differences [...]. Therefore, when challenging engrained social values, such as gendered power inequalities, tact, diplomacy and patience must be employed as well as an awareness that a different point of view is just the view from somewhere you are not. [...]



Some of the cultural differences I have explored in this report are something that as a westerner I am anxious to examine, and I am aware of the possibility of bringing an essentially Eurocentric lenses of understanding to a situation I have limited knowledge of. I

have always strived to see cultural variation as neither better nor worse, simply different. But as a Western woman living in Uganda, I not only experience first hand the alienation of being a minority, but also the oppression of being female. As a result, challenging the inequalities of marginalized and exploited groups in society has become the focal point of my time here and will be a passion that I carry with me throughout my life. I feel it is important to highlight the enormity of a problem which is the scourge of a wonderful, vibrant culture.

Emma, Finish volunteer in Mozambique:

As my Portuguese was pretty bad in the first few months I wasn't able to communicate with people as much as I wanted to which made it hard for me to get into the culture and learn to understand it. Last three months my Portuguese was already good enough to have conversations about something deeper as well and not just about the weather. [...] I have noticed myself using same kind of face impressions and specific phrases in my language really naturally than the locals do. I have also noticed the difference in the way I got treated by other people in the end of my stay comparing to the beginning. I felt like I was accepted to the society as a part of it.

Living Situation

As the participants of this programme are all volunteers they were not expected to rent their own apartment but were hosted either by local families, by the host project or with other volunteers. Some of the experiences of the different living situations can be read here:

Tarek, Austrian Volunteer in Kenya:

25 km southwest from Migori. A place maps cannot show exactly anymore. A house made of bricks! Own room, big living room, gas stove. There's no water from the tap, we have to fetch it from the water pump outside. Electricity: none. The house is surrounded by a big garden. Mango trees, papaya, pineapples, avocado. The area is rich in rainfalls. The



surrounding hills are gently covered by green vegetation, some single trees. Most of the houses are semi-permanent. That means: Inner walls made of soil, outer walls made of ant hill soil. Yes, here it is: The real Africa. The cliché is perfect. Women carrying goods on their heads, cows ploughing the fields. Crowds of children shouting "how are you", others run away crying because of my colour of skin. Smiling, curious faces, open mouths everywhere I come. Hard working men, harder working women. [...] The area is one of the "poorest" parts in Kenya. Can you imagine feeding your family by only earning some 1,50 Euros a day? They can. But sending the numerous kids to secondary school which is not free of charge seems almost impossible for some families. It is even harder for the many orphans in this area. Those who can afford wear their school uniforms with pride, even when they are fixed with 100 stitches.

Milla, Finnish volunteer in South Africa:

Oh, Cape Town starts feeling like home now! My new host family is really great - or just the way a host family should be. They share their culture and I feel like being a family member. [...] I live now in Lansdowne, at the southern suburbs of Cape Town. I do like the area and it is a walking distance from the office of Volunteer Centre, which is a nice thing too! Our house has six rooms, kitchen, bathroom and a nice garden. At the house there are living my

host mother, host father and their two daughters together with their boyfriends staying in the same house. At our house we also have three dogs and I am still busy learning who lives outside and who inside and who is jumping to the street and who is not allowed to go there. [...] Sometimes we have issues what comes to them being parents and us being the "children". I mean, since I was 18 years old I've been living alone – so I am quite independent and willing to keep it that way. But on the other hand I knew I am going to stay in a family and getting this role of a child so it has been okay – in the end of the day it is their house and I want to respect the rules.

But what is really irritating me is the role of the males. There are no signs of equality and what comes to house-holding works; it is the duty of females. The females are trying to arise this issue, and so the man of the house says he's not working in kitchen because of his gender. Also if we are having different opinions, the father is always the one with the right opinion. Until some point I am trying to explain my opinions and thoughts to him but I have the feeling that I always need to give up because of my gender. Since I am totally not used to this I am just trying to cope and not to make any conflicts between us – and I have really begun to appreciate the guys back home.

Isabel, Mozambican Volunteer in Finland:

I am living near to a small village called Hämeenkoski in the countryside. I am living with one couple. They are married and they have four sons and live together with five people with disabilities.

Steward, British volunteer in Mozambique:



I live with a local family in a suburb called Laulane, approximately 1 - 1½ hours outside of Maputo city by bus. The house is a 30 minute walk from the chappa stop and it is common for the street lights to not be working, meaning a great view of the stars if a little scary! I share a room with my host brother, Boa, a 24 year old. The house is brick built, normally with running water and a back yard where I play football with kids, once the chickens have been scared off! The best thing about living with the family, other than the great food, is the kindness shown to me by everyone. All members of the family

have been exceptionally open, warm and friendly and have really gone out of their way to make me feel at home. The food consists of huge plates of rice, beans, Matapa, chicken or fish so good that it would grace any restaurant. Living with a host family has given me a real insight into the daily lives of normal Mozambicans that other foreigners and tourists simply do not see. It certainly makes you realize how lucky and spoilt we are in the west. [...] Fortunately I have not really had any serious conflicts with my family. I have keys to the house and can come and go as I please. The only issue that I did have was that breakfast would take an exceptionally long time to prepare (I am not allowed to help!) and I would often be late for meetings etc. As such I spoke to Boa and we agreed to buy the bread the night before and we could therefore have breakfast without me being rude and still make my appointments.

Omuwunmi, Nigerian volunteer in Italy:

[...] I live in an apartment with other Volunteers. We are ten in number which makes it much more interesting, because we are all from different countries, from America, Greece,



Armenia, Nepal, Lithuania, Georgia, Sweden etc. This gave me the opportunity to learn more about different countries. They are all nice and understanding. At the moment, I have not had any conflict with any of.

Julie, French Volunteer in South Africa:

I have been living within a Muslim host family with Milla, the other volunteer, for two months. It was a good thing in the sense that it erased some prejudices I had against the Muslim religion. [...] Our rooms surprisingly had no doors. The only door that existed in the separate cottage we were living in was the bathroom one. And since the host family still had some personal items like cloths, beddings, bath towels etc. stocked in my room, they would enter in my room anytime, whether I was sleeping or not, changing my cloths, etc. [...] To me it was first almost unbearable, as I felt that they were intruding into my privacy; but I didn't want to complain because I felt that it was my duty as a guest to adapt to their way of life. So I tried to adapt, and since then, I have noticed that I am much less "private space concerned"! So that was a good experience in the end!



Hanna, Finnish volunteer in Ghana:

[...] I was to sleep in the children's home. [...] In my place came also two German girls from another organisation, and later also an Austrian girl via ICYE for a shorter time. We are sharing a room and getting along well. [...] We have a nice bathroom and we can eat our meals in a kitchen together. The conditions are good. Only we have no running water but we carry the water from a tap outside, so it's easy.

Elisa, Italian volunteer in Kenya

About my host family I have nothing bad to say. They are special, very nice and they make me feel really at home! There is comprehension and respect for each other. I live with them since my arrival. They are the best part of my project. [...] I'm so sad to leave my host family. Now [in may] I can say that they are my African family. I'm not a guest for them; I'm just Elisa, their Italian daughter!



Signe, Danish volunteer in Nigeria:

My host mother and I didn't get along well but with time we got along fine by adapting to each others needs and personalities.

Grace, British Volunteer in Uganda:

My family is very caring and look after me well but there are eight of them living in a five room unfurnished house, without water or electricity, and I have one of the rooms and one of the two beds. Only one person in the house has any income. It not only made me feel uncomfortable to discover [...] that they may have certain expectations of me; that I will buy them things, for example, or pay for them to do things, which as a volunteer, I do not have capacity to do and do not feel comfortable doing as once you start providing financial support it may escalate to an unmanageable point and a dependency could develop.

Work / Host project

“However I have the feeling that I already found some tasks that make sense. There are even hard times I am going through, but all the things happen under the shadow of the awareness that it is part of a big, unforgettable experience” (Tarek).

All the volunteers participated in local projects that tackled the issue of Social Inclusion in one or another way. The projects are working on a non profit basis and the input of the volunteer should have a positive impact and benefit for the local community. The variety of organisations and tasks are presented in the following pages:

Tarek, Austrian volunteer in Kenya

Rural Integrated Solidarity Empowerment Trust/. RISE Trust is involved in community activities that empower members such as good agricultural practices, micro financing and small enterprise development, youth counselling, orphanage and education.

It is just wonderful that there are persons like my “new” mom, “Eunita”. Not that she is “only” taking care about 16 (!) orphans. She is even chairlady of the organisation I am actually working with: “R.I.S.E. Trust”. With its office in Migori, south-western part of Kenya, the organisation is taking care of a number of orphans, youth - and women groups in this area. By holding seminars and giving small loans, they are working on maintenance and progress of the groups.

The one youth group nearby my home is called “Modali”. As a member now I join their agricultural activities. You would never like to see me ploughing a field in the beginning, because you wouldn’t know whether to laugh or cry [...] As the cooperation between us I would call a “win-win situation”, I am able to help them with keeping clear the records for the loans they give to people.

The work I am also doing at the R.I.S.E. office is helping whenever there is a computer problem and helping to keep the documents like receipts and reports in an order. The project I am just about to start up is to establish a website for the organisation. As all things take their time in Africa, it will even take me some to finish that project due to sluggish internet connections. [...]

At the local school I was giving sports, music and English-lessons in both, primary and secondary school. Working together with kids and youth was the kind of work I enjoyed most. [...] Since I was able to get a guitar by the end of October I could enrich the teaching for me and for a lot of the children. Although my knowledge of playing guitar is limited we



managed to sing some very nice songs together. Meanwhile it is difficult to teach up to 62 children per class at a time. They like most the songs where they can clap the hands and feet. Those moments of entering the class room and watching into the children’s eyes full of joy for the upcoming music lesson and the happy faces when singing make me most happy! Sometimes I sit down in the shadow of a big tree. In seconds hundred of kids surround me listening with open mouths and huge children’s eyes.

Milla, Finnish Volunteer in South Africa:

Volunteer Centre: The Centre is a volunteer development organisation for previously disadvantaged young people. The community volunteering is a primary way in which youth are mobilized to help and support others and to gain skill. The centre fights against unemployment and offers resources for

tertiary education. The head office has satellite offices in rural and disadvantaged areas such as Kindergartens and shelters.

My host organisation Volunteer Centre placed me to work for their member organisations; three days a week I am working in Mitchells Plain, in the largest coloured community some 30km away from Cape Town's Central Business District. Thursdays I attend a Xhosa-course and Fridays I am working at the office of the Volunteer Centre.

Mondays and Wednesdays in Mitchells Plain I am working at a shelter. There are two buildings where I am arranging program for children from abusive backgrounds. I find my work quite challenging, because also the group is changing all the time – depending on who is staying at the shelter at that particular day. Usually I have 10-15 children in my group – the youngest are three years old and the oldest are teenagers. Together we are playing, singing, doing all kind of educational activities but also learning about other countries and life there.



Tuesdays I am working at a crèche [Educare] in a group with preschoolers. The children come from different areas and so in the everyday life at the crèche the teachers are speaking mostly English but also Afrikaans and Xhosa. I am really enjoying my work there; it is very interesting to see how things are working and share all kinds of educational thoughts with my co-workers.

[June]: It has clearly taken a while to find my feet here in Cape Town. I wasn't feeling well in my projects in Mitchells Plain and during the Easter time we did some new arrangements; I continued volunteering at the Educare in Mitchells Plain but stopped volunteering at the shelter. Instead of that I found a nice crèche [belonging to the Volunteer Centre] closer to where I stay and so for the last two months I have been volunteering there twice a week.

In Educare in Mitchells Plain I feel that especially during the last few months I have become as a "real" member of the staff. It feels nice to be (finally) accepted there! I can finally feel that some of the small seeds that I have tried to plant there are starting to grow. From my colleges there I got the absolutely best feedback: "In the beginning I wasn't sure if I would be able to work with 'those' [white] people but it's been really a pleasure to work with you". At Lady Buxton (my new placement) I've been really enjoying! As soon as I went there I felt "normal" – not that the place is similar than back home but the atmosphere has been quite easy to fit in. [...]

Generally my EVS-project has met my expectations. I was expecting to learn about the new culture, about the local people and their ways of seeing the world. [...] For my project I wanted to bring my knowledge and skills to share and also gain more grass-root information through my work. I didn't know my tasks and that the working places are going to be so many different organisations – that I am working every week in three different organisations. On the other hand this way I have seen more but it also takes more time to get into your project when you see the people there only once a week (especially in the beginning this takes quite a lot energy).

Isabel, Mozambican Volunteer in Finland:

Kuhankosken erityisammattikoulu: Community Living for people with special needs. Different vocational fields for disabled people that are taught in the school: Culture (art, handicraft), Natural resources and the Environment, Tourism, Catering and Domestic Services (household and customer services) and Prevocational Studies. The project consists of different living houses where the clients live. Each house has a supervisor, staff and one or two volunteers working there. The volunteer's

tasks are taking care of the people with special needs, helping in the garden and the house, organising small activities and events.

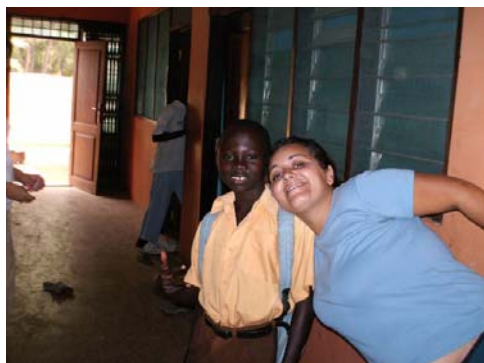
I am working with handicapped people and am taking care of one of them. She is a girl, 26 years old. I am helping her in the workshops; I bath her, play; go for walk and some times have fun.

[...] In the beginning I was not happy, because I expected to do something different. To live and work at the same place did not help me so much. But now, I know, I am a little bit happy, I can't say 100%, but I really like my work. [...] I work with handicapped people. From them I learn many things about life. Each time I was feeling sad, it was always them who put me up. We had so many events, like carnivals, Christmas, concerts, birthday parties. With all those things it was really good to see them so happy, that was making me happy too.



Mara, Italian volunteer in Ghana:

Handi Vangelism. This is a rehabilitation centre and children's home. It provides integrated rehabilitation and re-integration services for street kids, setting up monitoring mechanisms to avoid parents' and foster parents' conflict, and the facilitating agency, engaged in a community based poverty reduction project. The volunteers will work at the centre with the street children to take care of their needs and arrange activities with them.



Basically, my work is to take care of the needs and the kids and be always available for them (help them with their homework, be sure that they take a bath and brush their teeth). But the most interesting part of my work is the non-formal educational activities that I arrange during their free time at home. I try to improve their skills that they need to excel at school. I arrange a weekly topic of subjects that they don't study at school. I use a very interactive way to work with them because I wish to improve their personal initiative and let them free to show their interest. [...]

My last time in the host project was less dynamic than the beginning. I felt tired but completely integrated in the group and the community. I felt the kids hosted in the project more close to me.

Steward, British volunteer in Mozambique:

ACCORD – Association for Cooperation and Development, is a non profit youth organisation working in the field of national disaster relief, HIV/AIDS, Malaria and youth capacity building.

My project is a local Mozambican organisation officially aimed at increasing youth participation in areas such as HIV/AIDS, education, training, youth capacity building and economic and social development issues. My role within this organisation, although specifically undefined, has generally been to introduce ACCORD to as many prospective partners working in the above fields as possible and therefore increase the organisations capacity to function. To achieve this I have rewritten the organisations profile and contacted numerous organisations,



NGO's, UN agencies and other related organisations who may be interested in ACCORDs work or have future volunteer opportunities for them. Currently there have been a few interested parties though nothing concrete as the follow up from ACCORD can be a little slow! [...] However, I very much admire the young people who wish to make a difference to their country and actively take part in bringing about change. The majority of the volunteers are extremely friendly and welcoming.

[June:] I was extremely pleased with the work that had been accomplished and I didn't want it to end. I hoped that the techniques and skills that I had shown were useful and allow the organisation to move forward. I had also learned a tremendous amount and was just grateful for being included.

Omowunmi, Nigerian volunteer in Italy:

Associazione Volontarius "Centri e Servizi per I senza fissa dimora". The centre offers hospitality and temporary assistance (lodging, personal hygiene service, meals, medical, psychological and legal) to homeless people that may be local or immigrants, men, women and children, even without any regular stay of permit or similar (with the authorization of the mayor of Bolzano). Their activities lead to the reintegration in social life through Assistance, Listening, and Accompaniment.



I'm really enjoying my projects here in Bolzano Bozen (Italy). [...] I presently work with three projects: Refugees Centre, Centre for Homeless Teenagers, and Project Alba. Alba is involved with the rehabilitation of Prostitutes, and I join the crew each time they go on street work to meet the prostitutes where they work. We give them condoms, hot tea or coffee when the weather is cold, and also other things like sweets, biscuits etc. This enable us have a closer contact with them, and afterwards we could council them and render necessary assistance to them. [...]

Through the work I was able to learn a second language and I got self accomplishment. I can boost my CV with this experience.

Raimonda, Lithuanian Volunteer in Nigeria:

Action Health Incorporated (AHI). AHI is a pioneering NGO dedicated to improving the health of Nigerian adolescents. They create awareness on the status of adolescent health in Nigeria and the need to take immediate positive action among parents, policy makers, and the community at large and to empower the youth concerning their sexuality and life planning.

My project works with youth between 9 and 24 years. They focus on youth development, sexual education (HIV/AIDS) and Family Life HIV Education (F.L.H.E.)

I worked in different units of AHI: In the beginning I was helping staff with daily duties. It seemed everyone had their own duties and there was no work left for one more person. [...] Everyday I had to ask my supervisor to give me tasks. Most part of my time I felt I could have been assigned more tasks, which would have added more to my work experience. [...]

I was patiently waiting one more month till one day I accidentally met one of the executive directors and was asked about my work. I told the truth and situation became better. I worked five days a week from 8am till 5pm. I was placed in the Resources and Documentation Unit, which is responsible for publishing the youth magazine "Growing up", AHI publications, library and AHI website. I worked as an assistance of senior program officer and helped to write articles for the "growing up" magazine, reports, reviewed AHI publications, magazines, website and contributed all new projects with new ideas. I helped

to organise a “Read me” competition and was a member of annual “Teenage Festival of Life” committee. Aside from that, I assisted in delivering computer classes for basic knowledge of Microsoft Office.

Despite some challenges and misunderstandings, I really enjoyed my internship in AHI. The people are friendly and willing to help. I got to know a lot of things about the country, people, social and health life in Nigeria and I have learned many things related to NGO’s work in Nigeria. I hope I will be able to use it as part of my experience in my further life.



Julie, French Volunteer in South Africa:

Volunteer Centre: The Centre is a volunteer development organisation for previously disadvantaged young people. The community volunteering is a primary way in which youth are mobilized to help and support others and to gain skill. The centre fights against unemployment and offers resources for tertiary education. The head office has satellite offices in rural and disadvantaged areas.

I have started to teach pre-school learners in Oceanview at Aquila pre-school, through the “big things begin little” project, initiated by Chantél, my supervisor. It was quite a challenge for me since I have never taught a language to people who cannot read or write! The purpose of this course is not only to teach French so that they can work/travel in half of the African continent, but also to empower them by, first, making their brains used to hear and learn various languages, secondly, broaden their horizons and make them think as citizens of the world, not only as South Africans, to show them that the world is much broader than what they have experienced of it so far.



My highlight is definitely their Christmas Show on the 2nd of December! I really enjoyed their performance in telling us the story of Jesus. It was a big surprise for me when, at the end, teacher Val’ called me to come on the stage with the children and sing with them the Christmas song I had taught them two weeks ago in one hour!!! I didn’t know they had planned it and I thought that the children couldn’t remember something they had been taught quickly in a foreign language a couple of weeks ago! But they did, and so well!!! I was much moved and very proud of them!

Apart from teaching English and French to pre-schoolers, I also supported the Volunteer centre in improving their website and their communication in form of a newsletter. When ever there were computer tasks or reports to write they asked me to help them. So I also assisted in computer skills trainings. Part of my work was an international exchange impact survey which was quite interesting to analyse. In general I supported the centre in the youth recruitment process and also developed a presentation for it.

Hope, Ugandan Volunteer in UK:

Freshwinds charity offers care and support without charge to adults and children living with life limiting illnesses, as well as individuals with socially excluded backgrounds. The overall theme of Freshwinds is the support of minority groups and raising awareness about social inclusion through the work they do in the following areas: sexual and reproductive health, HIV/Aids, integrated complementary therapy, advocacy, employment and debt counselling.

Some of my task and achievements were the implementation of the new department's project guideline to work with clients, and assess performance as a project in regard to help clients becoming independent. I also helped in the office, e.g. preparing rooms for trainings and the care of the database entry. I also had the change to present a new project to the rightful authorities (commissioners). Personally I am happy because I am helping to implement a new guide in my department that was issued by Birmingham city council. My role is to go out with support workers and assess performance of clients since they started accessing our services. Then we see where we can go from where we are as an organisation and find ways of improving and helping the individual client moving towards self independence. I am really enjoying what I am doing since I originally wanted to do something that involved interacting with the clients.



My last time in the project was filled with a lot of excitement. The closer I got to the 5th of June, the more excited I became. I went with the support worker in my department and bid farewell to some of the clients with whom I had freely interacted. During the last few days, I went over my reports that I had written for my department, host project and EVS, just to be sure I was ready when the 4th of June came in. My last day at work was filled with a lot of emotion for me as I found myself crying every time somebody hugged me to say goodbye, it was a days of handing in reports and taking lots of pictures until the evening when I went home.

Anna-Karin, Swedish volunteer in Uganda

KIYUMBAKIMU Children Village. The aim of the Kiyumbakimu Children Village is to give orphaned and disadvantaged children an education, home and better living condition / life like other children in the world. The Village is located in a rural area of South-western Uganda. It was opened in December 2007.



I celebrated a very nice Christmas in the children's village, which from the 12th of December actually has children living there. [...] It was not opened when I arrived, so I helped to accountancy, fundraising, writing newsletters. [...] It has been a lot of hard work to get to the point where they moved in, and still we aren't finished with all the building work. But we didn't want to wait any longer, our temporary solutions work fine, at least for the moment. We use their living room as classroom, where we teach them until school

starts in January, and it's no problem eating in the kitchen even though there's no door. Money has been and still is the biggest problem. [...] So one of our major tasks is fundraising which isn't easy, but each child has a sponsor from Italy and "Brush out poverty" pays their school fees. So for now we are ok.

We visited SOS Children's Villages and thought their set up was very good. So we decided to work in the same way. At SOS they have ten orphans and one mother living as a family and the children go to school outside of the Children's Village, which we thought was important for their social life. Before the set up at Kiyumbakimu was more as a boarding school but we said that either we are a boarding school or an orphanage. So we hired a mother and registered the children in a new school.

[...] It has been very rewarding working with the children, they have adapted surprisingly well to the move and their new mother and life in general. We made them a football pitch which I think they are the most happy about, they are all just obsessed with football. Sometimes in the evenings they tell us stories, in Luganda, so we don't understand but still it's adorable.

[...] The last months at my project I worked mostly at a proposal for a foundation that might be able to help us with funding. In March we also started a free nursery. We chose the 15 children from the area that we thought were in greatest need. They now come to Kiyumbakimu for classes and porridge every day. Besides that I taught the kids, did the administrative work as always. On my last night we had a goodbye party, ate good food and the kids sang and danced. It was a very nice way to say goodbye and very moving.



Elisa, Italian volunteer in Kenya, December

Angaza Trust: ANGAZA Trust is a Community Based Trust working to assist street and vulnerable children, youth and the communities to develop; peer education, HIV/AIDS prevention, drug abuse, micro enterprise development and promote awareness of the needs and rights of poor, homeless and abused children. The organisation also is involved in promoting football as sport activity.

I arrived in Angaza Trust in September 2007. The organisation works in a slum called Mukuru Kwa Njenga since 1999 and it assists children and young people in poor communities. Angaza has a primary school in Kwa Njenga and the students are more than 210 (from baby class to stage six). I organised a visit to the museum with a group of pupils.



Angaza also established youth groups (15-18 years) and a young mother's support group.

For about three months I tried to fit my self in the slum's contest. Even going alone to work was a big step forward. I thought it was important at the beginning to know the pupils, the teachers and in general the community of the slum. I didn't want to force them to accept me; I preferred it was a slow challenge. I know the problem is the colour of my skin!!!

Political disorder's period brought us to stop the job in the slum and our meeting. Now that the calm returned, from the middle of January, I restarted to work, but the staff meetings are interrupted yet. I have focused my attention (until the end) toward Women/Parents Program. Together with an African volunteer I'm trying to lead a Support Group for young mothers and single parents. The purpose of this group is to start a small business of fruits, juice and crisps getting money. Actually there are 13 but there isn't constancy. Most of them don't come every Friday (day chosen for the weekly meeting). My Objectives for the support group: home visit for the mothers who wont come to the group to encourage them; introducing psychological support; doing activities for the unity of the mother's group; creating a co-operative net with the others mother's groups

of the slum; leading them to use their capacity, potentiality to live better in a hard reality like slum; selves-leading (because I'm leaving in June); by home visit I would like that the parents take consciousness that they are in a position to take their responsibilities for family/children seriously and to empower them economically, legally and socially

[May:] It was very hard to start with my own project, the young mother's support group. We have a little business started by ourselves (selling vegetables) to get some money. I want to propose a new support group for the mothers who are HIV/AIDS positive and an "adult learning" for those who want to learn to read and write.

I would like to write that I had success with the support group, but is not so. In this month I didn't go to the weekly meeting, because I want to know how much relevance they see in this group. But they never met without me and I don't see any intention from them to continue this group after my departure.

Prisca, Kenyan Volunteer in Austria:

Jugendzentrum PAHO. Intercultural, non-violence and non-racist learning is the aim of the Jugendzentrum Hanssionsiedlung. The target group are children, teens and youth. The centre offers different activities: music, creative workshops, dance, sports, girls groups.



Youngsters between 6 to 18 years attend the activities (sometimes even up to 25 years). They are divided into three groups: 6-11 years Kinder [kids], 11 –13 years Teenies, 13 – 25 years Jugendliche (Adolescents). I worked in all the activities offered by the centre. What I love most is working with the girls and the kids (easier with the language). I feel that I am finally beginning to socialise with the kids in German language.

[...] I was involved in most tasks of the project because I did not have specific or any assigned tasks that I was meant to fulfil. I worked with kids aged 6 years to 20 years and with girls aged 11 years to 16 years. The tasks in the Jugendzentrum vary every month and they could be from having cooking duels to having sport tournaments or just socializing with kids and see how they are doing.

I would say the tasks were not many but it is in the structure of the Jugendzentrum because I got bored sometimes and other days I was busy depending on the kids that would visit the Jugendzentrum on a specific day. Or also if the Youth was willing to participate in the activity for that day

Hanna, Finnish volunteer in Ghana, December:

Handi Vangelism. This is a rehabilitation centre and children's home. It provides integrated rehabilitation and re-integration services for street kids, setting up monitoring mechanisms to avoid parents' and foster parents' conflict, and the facilitating agency, engaged in a community based poverty reduction project. The volunteers work at the centre with the street children to take care of their needs and arrange activities with them.

In my project which is a children's home we take care of boys up from seven years old. We also live in the home. So the most important thing is just being there, "playing Mum", help when they get hurt, wake up in the morning, walk with them to the school bus, make them take their bath in time, and first of all, talk and listen to them, spend time



around. We also teach them new things they don't learn in school like creative skills and geography. We try to make the learning "nice", so that it is not like school but rather nice time together. I am very happy at my work. It requires a lot of devotion and initiatives to find the best ways to be there for the boys and help them. I already feel I have managed to do many things and of course have learnt so much for myself.

My project is really great. I love it. I love it how small the house is, how lively the children are, how they enjoy their time with us and learning new things. In the beginning it got some time to get started, because the pastor who is the leader of this house, didn't give us clear instructions what actually we can do with the kids. But then luckily an old ICYE volunteer arrived to visit the place and told us so many good ideas what we can do here. And since that we have been having many ideas of our own and the kids have seemed to enjoy them. And of course, I'm going to miss the kids at our projects. By now I really know them and I love them, there are a few especially close to me, our only girl Matilda for example - now its holiday and anytime she comes to our house, she just pops by in our room to meet me. It breaks my heart to think that in a month time I have to leave her, and all the others, behind.



Signe, Danish volunteer in Nigeria:

Development Recourse Initiative Foundation (DRIF). DRIF is a service oriented network of development organisations. The regular activities are: provision of technical support and services to NGOs, multilaterals and the private sector; training of young persons and teachers on peer education/HIV/AIDS programme, facilitating the emerging of new crops of leaders within the civil society sector towards strengthening democracy and development initiatives, seminars and conferences.

My organisation mainly works with Nigerian women, children and disabled people. In the beginning I worked at the office from 8 to 17. With the time I became freer to do work where it suited me best. I tried to give ideas for project creations and the funding, and also the implementation. I did a seminar for nurses in Lagos State Hospital about becoming an educator (seminar in good behaviour). I organised the interaction between private school children and street children: playing football two times a week and also the interaction with the parents about helping their kids getting into school. I also assisted my boss in his work (kind of personal assistant).



[...] I was working with Nigerian who had never worked with white people before and we had to learn each others "language" and I had to find my place in the company, I got many good friends from my work.

Grace, British Volunteer in Uganda:

Africa Mentoring Institute. The institute organises mentoring programmes for youngsters that either are attending school or have dropped out. It also offers capacity building and trainings to rural communities, as AIDS/HIV prevention, resource mobilisation, community training.

In order to obtain work and enough money for simple sustenance most individuals in Kampala create their own businesses. For example a lot of people sell small trinkets, newspapers, biscuits or other small-scale goods to people in the Taxi Park and markets, but in order to do this, one must begin with some start up capital which is difficult for the

majority of citizens. Most of the work in Kampala appears to be in the social services or development, but the majority of these jobs require experience so most go to highly qualified expatriates. In the light of this employment context, it is not surprising that most qualified Ugandans are looking for opportunities to emigrate, but this mass exodus of skilled graduates from the country is part of the predicament hampering Uganda's progress.

To combat this problem the Africa Mentoring Institute is a capacity building, sustainable human development organization which provides practical leadership, business and career coaching. It provides training and mentoring, delivering diplomas on topics as diverse as



entrepreneurship and job creation to child psychotherapy.

[...] I was not given any specific tasks but worked in the programmes department creating and developing new projects. I wrote a training manual on communication skills, developed and delivered a holiday programme for young people, delivered training to military nurses in personal development, communication for VCT and HIV. [...] I wrote a five year strategic plan and fundraised and developed a library for the local community. [...] I have been involved in delivering a mentoring and

personal development programme for youth in the local community. [...]

This link between HIV/Aids and domestic violence made me consider the possibility of training the military nurses that I had been working with on the problem of domestic violence so that they can cascade the information down to other community members. I knew this would be a challenge as violence is an everyday part of military life, but that has made it all the more important for me to succeed. The discussed issue was obvious to them and they all believed that it is a problem within their community. We had a debate on the following statement "Women and men can never be equal, a man is the head of the household and the woman's role is to serve and obey him!" What I found most surprising was that the females in the groups were the strongest advocates of the statement. The bible was often used to defend the statement and I became aware that many women were led by faith based attitudes towards divorce and submission to stay in oppressive marriages that not only endanger their health but also their lives. [...]

My work so far has to date been challenging and demanding but also tremendously broadening and enriching.

Emmanuel, Ghanaian Volunteer In Italy:

Rifugio Re Carlo Alberto: the centre hosts non-self sufficient elders and also some disabled adults and it contains a daily centre for people affected by Alzheimer.

The main duties of my work are to help the elderly people in their daily activities (eating, washing, free-time etc.). [...] I will say for the past five months that I have been at my project as an EVS volunteer, I will say it has been a great time because I have helped in so many activities.



Emma, Finnish volunteer in Mozambique:

Horizonte Azul. In this project less privileged children get together. The main activities are school reintegration/integration, food supply, indirect health assistance (accompanying children to the hospital in case of sickness and medical support, etc), cultural activities (theatre, traditional dance and singing, drawing and sports).

My project focuses on the problems in the area (Maxaquene) which is one of the poorest in Maputo. The main activity is educating people about health and hygiene, school and homework assistance (trying to help the kids to stay in school) and cultural activities such as dancing, music and arts.

My main tasks were teaching art to the children, teaching English to my colleagues and translating documents from Portuguese to English. I think that the English and art lessons were a success. I finally learnt Portuguese and adopted the Mozambican culture.

The last working day in my project was really nice. In the morning I gave the last English lesson, for my colleagues. I was impressed by how much they had improved their language and quite proud of myself as well as I was the one who helped them. We agreed to continue the English lessons via e-mail after I am gone. In the afternoon was time for the last drawing lesson for the children in the area. I felt a little bit sad but I just had to try not to show it. Hopefully I will get a chance in the near future to return to Mozambique and meet everyone again. My colleagues were so nice and open for new ideas and the kids were so sweet ;.) ; Miss them already.

Different encounters of living in another culture

"It's hard for me to try and describe SOMETHING to my family and friends, who can't imagine AT ALL what I'm in the middle of. Speaking to them, I just don't know where to start" (Hanna in Ghana).

As all the volunteers left to spend nine months in a completely different environment as their own. They faced diverse situations and encounters. Some of them were difficult, some rather nice and positive, others just different. Here you can read some examples of the variety of moments and experiences the volunteers lived through.

Tarek, Austrian volunteer in Kenya

A big issue is **religion**. If you aren't religious, you better invent a religion for yourself as people would not understand. And you will get confronted for sure. I am just lucky as I am free to join the prayers at home or not.

A problem is the **oppression of many women**. First, raping, even child raping, is shockingly common. Secondly, you can hardly find any woman owning property. So for economic reasons, most women depend on their husband, which some of them they have to share with other wives. Sometimes it drives me mad watching husbands lying around idle, while their wives and children do everything and more for them.

Milla, Finnish Volunteer in South Africa:

[...] Since I have seen how Cape Town is divided in different areas, I have made more choices to go to areas where I feel better - I think in this cultural and historical context it is easier and safer **to be one of the whites** than the only white. I don't really know how I feel about this; [...] Maybe on some day I will regret this, but I hope to remember how tiring and scary it was to work there, where the community keeps reminding you that you don't belong there. [...] I will probably never get used to this **high insecurity** level here in South

Africa. Hearing all those scary stories makes me fear but also wonder, how people can live here with such a constant feeling.

What I really like here is the **happiness and joy** you can 'read' from people's face! People are also in general more **talkative** and small talk here is much easier than what it is back home! What I find funny is the way how three people sometimes talk to each other. If person A wants to ask how person B is doing, he doesn't ask that person directly but asks maybe person C, if he might know how A is doing – although they all would be in the same place.

I've also learned that it is different how people see '**family**'; for me 'family' is the very close circle of siblings and parents as compared to here 'family' includes also more relatives. So 'we keep this in our family' can have many different meanings :-)

Isabel, Mozambican Volunteer in Finland:

The positive thing is my work. I like the friends I made here. I learnt to do so many new things and cook some dishes. [...] I like so many things here of course; I improve myself in different ways. [...] The negative is how people behave here sometimes. It is horrible for me to accept some things; E.g. the **darkness** did not affect me in the beginning, but then: almost five months I did not see the sun at all.

Culture is just difficult to accept or get to use.



Steward, British volunteer in Mozambique:

A definite positive has been the **kindness** shown to me by complete strangers. It is not uncommon for people to go out of their way to help and invest a lot of their own time in assisting when the easiest thing to do is walk on by. This is normally accompanied with a chance for someone to practice their English! Another example is being invited to eat in people's houses when you are just visiting or waiting for someone. Nearly always you are expected to eat and are generally given the pick of the food that is both expensive and rare for people to eat.

[...] Mozambicans are generally not prompt when it comes to **timekeeping** and therefore a lot of time is wasted waiting for people. However this is easily explained away as 'Africa time'. **Working** with Mozambicans has been a steep learning curve. Whilst well meaning and kind it is often hard to get information from people who you know have the information but do not want to share it or think it is important. As such a lot of time and effort can be wasted. Apparently it is because I am asking the wrong questions!

Julie, French Volunteer in South Africa:

Because of the **Apartheid past**, I, as a white person, can sometimes feel barriers between the non-whites and me. I hate this feeling because they are only judging me upon the colour of my skin, but it is the most obvious first thing that people see and people have been raised like that in the Apartheid regime... This is why it was important for me to learn both Afrikaans and Xhosa, in order to make the barriers fall! I have started with Xhosa, the black community's language in our province. And it changes very thing! [...]

As far as **security** is concerned, we lived in one of the previously disadvantaged suburbs. There is no place in this country that can be called "safe", as both rich areas and poorer areas undergo crime, robberies and all of that. But the first victims are mostly the poorer people, although they don't owe much, because they live within the areas where most difficulties are encountered: unemployment, drug addictions, etc. It was quite an ordeal to live like the previously disadvantaged local people (that is the politically correct expression to nominate the non whites, i.e. the Coloured people, the Black people and the Indians), who take risks every day, just by walking in the streets and taking public transport to go to work.

After office hours, we couldn't leave the house so the area was dangerous. This is what all locals were advising, and all of them had a story to tell on how they've been robbed, or mugged! Knowing this, the whole environment seemed hostile, but fortunately, I could almost always find nice reliable people, mostly women, to help me find my way or the right bus.

There are so **many cultures within South Africa!** But surprisingly, with all different communities, we can enjoy the same sense of humour! Laughing together is a good indicator of how well you are integrated into the new culture(s)! Apart from that, I'd say that it is very interesting to adapt all the time to the different people you interact with, according to which community they belong to, (starting with the accent!). Sometimes, in one day, I have the feeling that I live in several countries at the same time! For example, last Saturday, I participated to a wedding, where there were only white people. They had a very non-conventional ceremony, and the bride was even wearing jeans! After that, I went to a party with some colleagues and friends who belong to the coloured community. They are much more traditional and religious, and the kind of party we have together, the topics we talk about, the way we have fun is again different! So by coming to South Africa, we get a chance to experience a big variety of cultures!

Hope, Ugandan volunteer in UK:

I am fine in Birmingham, a little bit cold since it is the onset of **winter** but it is an exciting feeling for me at the same time since I practically get to see ice on grass, cars, everywhere and not only in the fridge/freezer like back home.

Prisca, Kenyan volunteer in Austria:

Integration into the local community: This is very difficult in Austria, especially **being black** and a foreigner in the country because they never let you forget that you are not part of them which made it hard for me to integrate. However I gave it my best try.



Hanna, Finnish volunteer in Ghana:

I'm even finding myself enjoy the religious songs and worshipping, though I was so sceptic about that. Of course some fundamentalistic things annoy me, but the way **religion** makes these people HAPPY, makes also me happy. The same kind of surprise was going to the **hospital** when a small wound on my hand got infected. I was imagining a great, white house, the cold kind of building our hospital and doctor stations are, but faced a nice, small, yellow building with a lot of waiting (people are so patient here!) and the gentlest nurse I have ever met. It really makes me feel so good how people don't hurry here, but really concentrate on what they are doing and who they are dealing with. Of course, one time it was also frustrating when my friend got REALLY sick and then we had to wait and wait. But even then the other persons in the waiting room understood us and let her go before them.

[...] The biggest positive experiences that the new culture has brought to me are those brought by the **UNITY of the people** here. Seeing how close to each other people are in every day life and how they are sincerely caring, even about total strangers - that is something I was seriously lacking in Europe. [...] At the same time the ultimate closeness of the people is also the worst problem. When I feel sad or just need a moment alone privacy is hard, almost impossible to find.



I love **Ghanaian life**, the busy markets, the trotros (shouting ACCRACCRA and CIR-CIR-CIRCLE!), the friendly nurse at our nearby clinic who knows me already, the highlife and hiplife music (playing EVERYWHERE), the noisy street children who we visit every Sunday at Agbobloshi yam market, the animals running around everywhere, ... I love it!! And I know I'm going to miss it once it gets home. I know I'm going to get into trouble when I have to get used to European coldness again (and I don't mean the weather!!).

Grace, British Volunteer in Uganda:

Soon after arriving in Uganda, my host organisation's sister NGO asked me to lend them 300,000 Ugandan Shillings, which is a huge amount of **money** in Uganda and a loan with which I felt extremely uncomfortable. Although I do not doubt they would have paid it back, it is a situation that, as a volunteer, I should not have been put in to. [...] People in the street think that my orthodontic braces are jewellery and it is impossible for me to convey that they are not a sign of wealth. Children and adults alike are constantly asking for money. Everybody thinks that I can sponsor their children or finance their businesses. Everybody who sits next to you wants your phone number before they even know your name, contacts are worth more than time here which is a complete paradox to the Western way of thinking, as in the 'developed' world, time is money. Although most people are simply inquisitive and genuinely friendly and amiable I have found that many individuals in Uganda see **white people as an opportunity**. One evening, in the fading orange light of dusk, shortly after I arrived, I was standing at the back of my host family's house cradling the neighbour's twin babies while she cooked. She said that I will take the twins back to England with me, they would have a better life there and that she cannot afford to care for them. This was not a request, but more of a statement, and I had to explain why I could not take them, although my arguments appeared to go unnoticed.

Overall evaluation of the Voluntary Service

"From my voluntary service, I have learnt to even appreciate volunteers more since they set out to do something out of their own will without respecting anything in return. Every time I met up with volunteers from different countries, there was always a "free spirit" sense flowing among us, we all seemed to enjoy what we were doing and to sit back and reflect on this, it has been a wonderful experience" (Hope in the UK).

At the end of their stay the volunteers were asked how they view the overall experience of the Voluntary Service: what they gained, what changed how they feel about it in general. Almost all the volunteers mentioned that they were happy and thankful for having done this EVS and felt it was an enriching and enormous experience. You can read in more detail about their views here:

Milla, Finnish Volunteer in South Africa:

I think I have adapted and integrated quite well – it has become clearer to me how my own identity is, what I definitely want to keep from my own backgrounds but also what I am willing to take from these experiences here. I think nowadays I have also more opinions of the culture and habits of the South Africans. I think this cultural context here is sometimes a little bit tricky; although most of the things look like this could be Europe, the mentality and ways of thinking is more African. [...]

[...] I have definitely gained more self-confidence! I have faced many fears (what comes to crime related issues, speaking for groups of people in a language that is not my own and also co-operating with people that give you all the time negative and unfriendly feedback of yourself) and I think it has made me a stronger person. Also sometimes I didn't know how I should behave in this cultural context and so I have learned somehow to trust myself more but also forgive myself my mistakes. I'm also very happy to see how more fluent my English



has become and how much more comfortable I feel when I'm speaking English.

[...] I am a kindergarten teacher and also here I have been working with children. I can really say that I have gained more working experience but more important: more international experience. In Finland we have more and more foreigners and I believe it is very important to know how to co-operate with them. For my work with children this experience has given so much more understanding and knowledge, which you can not learn from the books. Working at the NGO sector has also been a new

experience for me and currently I am thinking that it might open some new doors when looking for employment back home.

[...] I feel very fortunate that it was possible to live through all these adventures and experiences here and I am sure I will see home in totally different eyes when I return! [...] I think EVS has given a lot to me and to my personality. Doing EVS has made me clearer of who I am and what kind of values and culture I am representing. [...].

I would definitely recommend EVS for everybody – and I will also do so! I really like the idea that this is an exchange program for young and unskilled volunteers so that these people can have the opportunity to go abroad – it is really an experience that will change so much in each and everyone's personal life! What I really do appreciate is the fact that the program is free of costs for the participants – please keep it that way, it gives really more opportunities for young people to attend this program. I also liked the way how our EU-Africa – program is built; before and after the voluntary time in host country everybody meets in Berlin for a weekend training and reflection. I would also like to thank you for giving me this great opportunity to attend EVS in South Africa! It has really had such a great impact on my life. I am sure I'll continue volunteering for your organisation when I return.

Mara, Italian volunteer in Ghana:

[...] I learnt better how to approach to "African" kids. It is something really different from the European ones. I gain more self-confidence and I discovered which my limits are and how to go ahead.

I appreciate the international and intercultural experience and learning within our international volunteer group.

Steward, British Volunteer in Mozambique:

[...] to have the most wonderful, fulfilling experience. It really has been the best time and I really appreciate it.

I gained a huge amount of work experience, working with both Africans and Westerners. I learned to adapt to different working practices and a whole new work ethic. The openness and friendship of my host family is something that I will never forget and something that I would love to repay one day.

The EVS was an excellent opportunity to experience new cultures and environments. It allowed me to work in a new field which I hope to continue and a new part of the world to where I hope to return.

Omuwunmi, Nigerian volunteer in Italy:

I could say now I have a wider view and perception about life. This first time leaving far away from home and it has taught me to be more independent, and being able to stand on my own. I could make decisions and take up responsibilities, concerning myself and about things in general. I was also exposed to a new and dynamic aspect of work and things in general.

Raimonda, Lithuanian volunteer in Nigeria:

It is still hard to say how much I have changed. I have to go back to "real" life, the place where I was living all my life. Even though I can already say that I became a stronger person, I forgive quicker people's mistakes, I have more patience than before and I think Nigeria taught me to adapt to any situation and to deal with any challenge much quicker.

[...] If someone asked me an advice about voluntary service in Nigeria, I would advice the person nothing. We are all different people with different backgrounds, different needs and different point of view. Voluntary service's projects are very different the same way all volunteers are different. The choice depends on individual requirements and sending organization abilities to find projects.

Julie, French Volunteer in South Africa:

This experience confirmed what I learnt in my previous volunteering experiences in Southern countries: when you give, you receive much more in return!

Also the fact of taking my time, planning less in order to be as available for others as South Africans, made a difference in my life!

I have learnt to dig into my deepest mental resources to make things happen despite the many materialistic and political obstacles I was facing.

This experience convinced me even more that education is the key to peace and development. Keeping people in ignorance generates the kind of dreadful events we experienced at the latest stage of our stay (xenophobic violence).

Hope, Ugandan volunteer in UK:

I have learnt to respect other people's opinions and respect the fact that we are all different. What is right for me does not necessarily mean it is right for the other person. Working in the office of my project taught me the importance of documentation. Especially where you have to be accountable, it is important to always have it written down as evidence as part of your daily activities.

I gained self confidence, this I can greatly say, from the trainings that I got the opportunity to attend. I had the opportunity to co-present with my supervisor people to some of the Commission about the work that we were doing.

From my voluntary service, I have learnt to even appreciate volunteers more since they set out to do something out of their own will without respecting anything in return. Every time I met up with volunteers from different countries, there was always a "free spirit" sense flowing among us, we all seemed to enjoy what we were doing and to sit back and reflect on this, it has been a wonderful experience.

Anna-Karin, Swedish Volunteer in Uganda:

I've become a more patient person, I've always thought of myself as very impatient but after nine months in Uganda I think I can cope with anything. I've lived in other countries before but none as different to my own as Uganda so after this I know I can adapt to any situation and culture. I've also become stronger and more able to stand up for myself; you have to when people try to rip you off all the time. And I've learnt not to let things get to me, In Uganda people can just tell you are fat or weak or they just laugh at you for no apparent reason and you won't survive if you listen to everything. I'm glad I got the chance to help

manage Kiyumbakimu because now I know that's something I'm capable of. Visiting the genocide memorial in Kigali was very moving and it made me certain I want to continue in the field of aid work. I also enjoyed fundraising and I'm glad I learnt how to write proper proposals, something that if I decide to go into aid work I think can be useful.

Prisca, Kenyan volunteer in Austria:

I have become more independent and become aware of the Austrian culture and how it can be very different and sometimes quite similar. I have also been able to acquire new skills from my project especially on how to handle teenagers and children. I have also been able to see for myself how youth in Austria can be very similar to youth in Kenya and how sometimes they can also be very different. [...]

I can now speak a bit of German. I have also had a lot of Austrian culture awareness and exposure. I have also acquired new skills at my work place like how to handle teenagers especially when there is conflict. Personally I learnt to live independently in a challenging environment with no family and with no good knowledge of the local language. My plan for the future is to get a job in the development sector at home and hope that my experience abroad will help me in achieving this.



Hanna, Finish volunteer in Ghana:



I have learnt to adjust, be patient, take it easy, not to stress, be initiative, to live in this moment and not next weeks. Also to respect different religious attitudes and ways of living. But also to see through "cultural" things" - not all is to be accepted just because it's part of the culture. [...].

I know deeper the local people and their ways of life. Not every where is like in Europe. We should appreciate what we have.

Signe, Danish volunteer in Nigeria:

I became more aware of where I come from, that I am Danish. [...] The people you meet touch you and you will change. And the other way round. [...] You can use it for future life. You can improve your personal skills. [...] On the question "How was it?" you can only answer "it was different", you cannot say it was bad or good!

[...] I have learnt that I have to ignore many issues in trying not to go insane. I am more relaxed now and I worry less about many things.

Emma, Finish volunteer in Mozambique:

First of all, I have at least learnt to appreciate what I got. I have realized what the most important things in my life are really and there are so many useless things I thought I couldn't live without. I am not that materialistic anymore what I used to be back in the days. Seeing people living a happy life only having a basic and, for me, really minimalistic living conditions who get about 1 \$ a day to survive with, has made a huge difference in my thinking.

Things to take and to leave behind

After nine months in another country there will be things that somebody is fed up with and therefore happy to leave behind. On the other hand there will also be things that one would love to keep and to take back to the home country. The volunteers mentioned the following things:

Milla, Finish volunteer in South Africa:

Happy to leave behind:

1. Insecurity in this city and in this country and especially the fear it is causing. 2. Clearly existing roles between men and women (women's place is in the kitchen etc). 3. The common and acceptable habit of drinking & driving.

Willing to take with me:

1. My dear sister and close friend Fredre. 2. Delicious Cape-Malay cuisine. 3. The warm and sunny weather during the summer months (it really gives you some extra energy!)

Steward, British volunteer in Mozambique:

Leave behind: Mosquito, corrupt policemen, outdoor toilets (anywhere!).

Mara, Italian volunteer in Ghana:

Leave behind: 1. Some conflicts, 2. The stress, 3. Mosquitoes

Take with me: 1. Sun, 2. Kids 3. The feeling that I was not judged

Omuwunmi, Nigerian volunteer in Italy:

The three things I would like to take along with me are 1. the transportation system, 2. the concept of timing and personality management, 3. the language.

The things I wouldn't like to along with me are 1. believe of superiority between the Africans and the Europeans and 2. the weather (winter).

Raimonda, Lithuanian volunteer in Nigeria:

Leave behind: traffic, public transport and fake people.

Take with me: contacts, benefits you get just because you are a white girl, Takwa Bay beach.

Julie, French Volunteer in South Africa:

I would leave behind the black against white simplistic views, the first judgment according to the colour of your skin, the global nonchalance about every thing that the majority of South Africans have.

I would take with me the availability of people, their happiness about little things and the constant blessings that people give you on your way.

Hope, Ugandan volunteer in UK:

Leave behind: Weather, expensive food.

Take with me: Friends, transport system, Social Care System, which is well developed, Internet.

Anna-Karin, Swedish Volunteer in Uganda:

I'd like to leave the talking behind people's backs and the lying which seems to be very common, at least in my village. I also want to leave the beating of children in schools; it's heartbreaking hearing the children telling me about when they have been beaten by their



teachers for the littlest things, like not understanding a word in English. I also want to leave the traffic, it's crazy and dangerous.

What I'd like to take with me home is the friendliness, the helpfulness and the children's singing and dancing.

Elisa, Italian volunteer in Kenya:

I leave behind pizza, happiness and thanking them for having been part of my life.

I take with me the unity of my host family, music and chapati.

Prisca, Kenyan volunteer in Austria:

Things I want to leave behind are the aloofness and individualistic tendencies of Europeans or Austrians in particular. The last thing is the superiority complex of some Austrians that there are better races than others.

Things that I would love to take home are the transport system because it is perfect. The last is time management and organisation skills. Because everything for me in Austria is always well planned and organised and things always timely and they take the time factor so seriously unlike in my home country.

Hanna, Finish volunteer in Ghana:

Leave behind: 1. Pastor, 2. Pressure for money. 3. Sugar bread

Take with me: 1. Being friendly to strangers. 2. Music. 3. This kid's smiles (because it wouldn't be fair to drag the kids themselves away from their home ;-)

Signe, Danish Volunteer in Nigeria:

Leave behind: Speaking before thinking, jumping into adventures without thinking about consequences, narrow mindness.

Take with me: Relaxation, self secureness, and love to the people I met.

Emma, Finish volunteer in Mozambique:

Leave behind: Rubbish, Men's attitude towards women, crazy traffic!!!

Take with me: Matapa, my friends, the joy of life.



5. The Visit of the European Commission in Ghana

In December Michèle Grombeer from the European Commission made a visit to analyse the implementation of the EU-AFRICA EVS project. She chose to visit Handi Vangelism in Accra/Ghana where our two volunteers Hanna Särkkä and Mara Lomonaco were placed. They remember warmly and positively this visit:

Hanna, from Finland:

It is easy to remember because it was so nice. The woman [Michèle Grombeer] didn't seem at all to be above us, some highly positioned person, but simply someone who was honestly interested to see how we live and work. She visited our project. We had a long and good talk about us, our coming here, working and living. She was really nice and easy to talk to. Then we showed her around the project and later the ICYE people took us all to eat and we spend the afternoon in a less formal way. To me it really felt like Michèle was interested to talk with us and share our experiences.



Mara from Italy:

We had a friendly and not formal conversation, explained and described how our host project works. She asked us how we found the programme and any kind of suggestions how to enlarge the way so that young people can know and join this opportunity.

I felt really comfortable and I realized that the "European Union" is somehow my "home continent". So I started to feel a "European citizenship" and finally discover that the whole European system and the opportunities that it offers to its citizen are for the first time for me really accessible and an open space. I would only wish that this programme could be more visible to more young people. Only few people know about it so far.

6. Relevance of Social Inclusion

"The children who sit unaccompanied for hours, crying in the dust, who have learnt to beg before they can walk no longer move me close to tears. I have learnt to ignore their pleading eyes and outstretched hands and hope that the practical work I do will be of more use than unsubstantial and unsustainable handouts" (Grace in Uganda).

The overall topic of this EU-Africa EVS project is Social Inclusion. Generally the volunteers participated in local projects that reduced social inclusion through their work and involvement. Here you can read some examples of social inclusion through the volunteers' private life, personal experiences and work:

Tarek, Austrian volunteer in Kenya:

A youth group called "Modali": Wednesday is youth group day. That Wednesday I had my first introduction to the local youth group called "Modali". 17 young people, partly orphans are involved. It was founded to help them taking care about themselves by planting together, selling as a co-operative on the local market, saving money to give little amounts as loans. They even contribute to the local community by helping to fix spoiled houses, latrines and roads. [...] Being part of a youth group also seems to give the members psychological support. As the MODALI history was told, I could hear the pride in the voice growing as we were told about the overall win of the local football cup.



[...] When at first I joined school, the office, church, etc. I was always introduced by someone and had the opportunity to tell who I am and what I am supposed to do in Kenya. When people were discussing, at many topics I was asked for my opinion. By some people I was given another name: "Onyango". It is my Luo name, as they name their children by times of the day. For me, those little things were acts of including somebody into their everyday life.

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Milla, Finish volunteer in South Africa:

In this South African context, where skin colour still speaks a lot, I think it has been difference making that I have been going to coloured townships to volunteer in the local communities. For me this has meant equality and sharing – giving and receiving new skills. Of course I do know about this country's history but I haven't been here and really lived through the apartheid years – but I do think that for most of my co-workers (especially in Mitchells Plain) it has been the first time when they are working together with a white person – and I hope this new equality has opened new doors for them.



That one week in October when I went to facilitate a training in Beaufort West really gave an input for me and an impact on my way of thinking. We had a training for young volunteers, who came to learn skills to be used for their office voluntary work in local NGO's. It was a pleasure to see how eagerly these young people learned to answer the office phone, to write down messages, to file things. I really felt that we are empowering these young people – not only for their voluntary work but also for their everyday life and possibilities to find employment, when they were encouraged to use English instead of Afrikaans.

Although I can see the topic "social inclusion" in my tasks I think the main difference can be found from the informal relationships that I have had; my friends, my family and the random people that I have been talking to. The discussions we have had have been very informal, but I think by listening and respecting people, just by being there for them you can make a difference.

Mara, Italian volunteer in Ghana:

The "social inclusion" was the main topic of my project concerned to the rehabilitation of street children. The project works to integrate the kids in the society again, sending them to school and let them stay in contact permanently with the community where they live.



Children in Kenya waiting for lunch



Emmanuel working with elderly people

Omuwunmi, Nigerian volunteer in Italy:

Social inclusion occurs in all spheres of my life. At work I had social inclusion because the ability to integrate myself to the new working environment was a social inclusion for me, although at the beginning it was not that easy, because of the language barrier, but much later when I could understand and express myself a little in Italian it became better.

Also, I encountered social inclusion where I lived, because the ability to live in a multicultural environment, and being able to adjust to the living situation was a good medium of social inclusion. I was able to learn new things and wider perception about some conceptions in life.

Julie, French Volunteer in South Africa:

I worked quite indirectly for social inclusion. Helping the Volunteer Centre indirectly helps the volunteers who experience social inclusion through their volunteering placement. However, during my volunteering (teaching) in a pre-school in a previously disadvantaged area, the mere fact that a white person comes into their area, spends time with them and gives them love helps directly to reduce the antagonism between the non-whites and the whites in SA.

Apart from my EVS, I taught English to pre-school learners in a black township. I think this is directly linked to social inclusion, as this gives them better chances once they start school, as every subject is taught in English.



Julie's present for giving French/English lessons

Hope, Ugandan volunteer in UK:

My project is socially inclusive since all the employees are of different nationalities: Jamaican, Irish, South African, Zimbabwe, and English... I could go on and on therefore the cultural diversity here is rich but all work towards helping people of all age groups living with life threatening illnesses and there is a little bit to learn from every one. [...]

I did have contact with the "social inclusion" topic at work and in daily life. At work, my project greatly values the work of volunteers, therefore people from all walks of life got the opportunity to do something that they were comfortable with right from gardening, which was done by an elderly man, to the reception, where an elderly lady as well did render her services for free. In the different departments we had a financial advisor who was disabled which I found quite good as people who are physically disabled within my country tend to be

overlooked. The fact that my project has a department for the gay people, offers counselling and helps those who want to “come out”, I found it fascinating since they had a place to go to. The Afro-Caribbean community was also well covered by having a department of it's own that works with this particular community. It was good enough in showing me how the project is greatly determined in working in line with its mission of including people with in the community who are socially excluded.

In my daily life, my whole EVS project, my house mates who were also EVS volunteers from different countries who would otherwise not have had the opportunity of doing different projects was good enough an example for me. [...]

Prisca, Kenyan volunteer in Austria:

I tried to raise awareness about my home country or Africa in general in my project. This was done by having African nights where we would play African games or cook African food.



Milla with children of the kindergarten



Isabel working with people with disabilities

7. Domestic Violence against Women in Uganda:

Workshops of the British Volunteer Grace McWilliams:

I became aware of huge gender inequalities in Uganda soon after arriving in the country. The people of Buganda (the largest of the traditional kingdoms in present-day Uganda) kneel to meet their elders as a sign of respect. Women are also expected to kneel for their husbands. This gender hierarchy manifests itself in a variety of different ways in Uganda, and appears to have arisen from a range of sources, such as 'traditional' beliefs, for example, or from colonialism and its missionary teachings. Yet all originate from one fundamental problem, the concentration of power in the hands of men and the resulting subordination of women.

I became increasingly aware of alarming incidents of violence experienced by women in intimate relationships, either through the media, talking to individuals about their experiences, or by witnessing displays of violence first hand. Indeed, it is a very palpable problem; according to U.N. statistics, in 2000, 41 percent of Ugandan women had suffered domestic violence (www.hrw.org/reports/2003/uganda0803/4.htm#_Toc47260350). This shocking figure does not even take into account the hidden abuse, in which women would be unable to disclose their experiences due to fear of retribution or feelings of shame. This is a horrifying statistic, and is reaching pandemic proportions. In an attempt to understand why domestic violence is such a problem in Uganda, I went to meet with a well established domestic violence prevention project in the suburbs of Kampala. I was told that many people simply believe men to be of more worth than women, and as a result, they have a higher status in the community. Subsequently, men are encouraged from birth to believe that women, especially their wives, are people over whom they should have power. Because of this belief system, the community then develops customs, norms and acceptable ways of behaving which endorse the gender hierarchy. In many communities, for example, men feel justified in using physical and psychological violence to control their wives or partners behavior.

In a similar way women are socialized to be submissive and subservient, and internalize an ideology in which they are of less value than men; many women that I have spoken to believe that their sole purpose as a female is to serve their husbands and provide them with children. These belief systems are strengthened by traditions such as the provision of a bride price, for example. This allows the husband to buy his wife from her family, and means that men can actually have ownership of their wives, thus intensifying the gender hierarchy between men and women and making cycles of violence even harder to break.

There is a positive correlation between domestic violence and the HIV and Aids epidemic. The November UNAIDS Aids epidemic update report notes that unlike other regions in the world the majority of the 61% of people infected with HIV/AIDS in Uganda are women (http://data.unaids.org/pub/EPISlides/2007/2007_epiupdate_en.pdf). This is due to a number of factors, all of which are linked to gender inequalities. Firstly, if you are in an abusive relationship the fear of violence may hinder any ability to negotiate safe sex - even if you are aware of infidelity. Secondly, the belief that you are your husband's property to use as he wishes, coupled with the notion that providing sex is part of your marital duties, gives way to the belief that you are not able to refuse sex even if it is unsafe. Female children are also socialized into subordinate behavior through being given duties which make them feel unequal to children of the opposite sex, and as a result they grow up feeling inferior and find it difficult to resist men's demands. Marital rape or forced sex also increases women's chances of contracting the virus, as when the vagina is dry it increases the chances of the delicate tissue ripping. Cross generational sex, in which young girls are coerced into sex with older men, often for financial gain, also increases chances of infection. The children may not

be educated enough about safe sex or the virus itself, or may simply not care when faced with the choice of being able to afford to eat or risking infection.

This link between HIV/Aids and domestic violence made me consider the possibility of training the military nurses that I had been working with on the problem of domestic violence so that they can cascade the information down to other community members. I knew this would be a challenge as violence is an everyday part of military life, but that has made it all the more important for me to succeed.



[...] The domestic violence workshops that I am running for the military personal at the Uganda Peoples Defence Force are going very well, despite me being extremely shocked by some of the opinions of my participants. Obviously violence is entrenched in every aspect of life in a military community, and my goal is to help participants separate the violence that is part of their professional lives from their personal and family lives. Then we can encourage participants to see that domestic violence is so prolific in Uganda

largely due to women's inferior and oppressed role within a society which allows this violence to happen and which encourages its acceptance. Talking to military men *and* women in Uganda about women's rights has been challenging. Many of the men I am working with beat their wives and believe that it is a way of showing love, and comments like "if we did not beat our wives they would think that we don't care", are common. Furthermore, once

men have 'bought' their wives from their families by paying bride price, the task of disciplining the woman falls to her husband; as one man told me: "they need to be taught right and wrong, they are like children, and cannot make decisions." Some of the debates and discussions have been fascinating and the group is open and honest. [...] The workshop highlighted how much work there is to do to get women and men on an equal footing. At the end of the session [...] I had to explain that we were not talking about men and women being the same - men and women will always be different, nobody is trying to dispute that - but that the differences should be something that we treasure. It is when the discrepancies in power between men and women become so pronounced, that women are seen as baser than men, to the point that violence towards women is seen as acceptable, and that this is what we are trying to challenge and what we are trying to stop. The women in the group



are under-represented and their voices soft, but slowly opinions of both the men and women are changing and the women are speaking up. There is still a long way to go before we see gender equality in Uganda, but if the seed of a new perspective is planted in just one person's mind, then I feel that my time here will have been worth it.

8. Kenya in Trouble, January 2008:

By Tarek Farwati, Austrian volunteer

The critical time before the elections passed without serious incidents. But nobody of us knew what would expect us afterwards.

It was a sleepy Sunday afternoon on which already tension was in the air. I just came back from my trip in Tanzania a couple of days ago. Still the election's results were not announced after almost three days. The night before, the ahead-position of opposition leader Raila Odinga of the ODM party wondrously turned to Kibaki in the lead. From that moment I knew, it's bedtime for democracy.

I wasn't surprised that on that afternoon, a roboter-like voice announced Kibaki as re-elected president. What now? Nobody knew. I am living in the land of the Luo people. Almost 100% of the people here voted for Raila. How would they react? What orders did the police forces receive? Will criminals take advantage of a possible chaos? Are we safe in our unguarded house? I could see in my host family members' eyes, that not only my mind was busy with all those questions. We could only sit, wait, hope.

On that evening all radio stations were only playing music, no news at all. Spooky. Then short messages were received on the displays of our phones: "Stay at home, store food for 45 days", "They already arrested the opposition leader." Suddenly I could hear angry people shouting, crying women. There was something going on in the nearby village. Then shots. We just stared at each other. My host mother whispered: "Now they start to kill people." The worst thing was not to know what was going on and what is going to happen. On the next day we found out, that angry villagers looted shops of the Kikuyu (most of them Kibaki-voters) and the police tried to stop them by shooting in the air. In that night I still found some sleep, but only with one eye open. Then, around 3 o' clock in the morning I could hear shouting and crying once more. All people in our house got up. My host father seemed very disturbed as I met him at the front door. "They're stealing my things" he cried out as he ran outside. Our four cows were stolen in that night. People were taking advantage of the chaos. After this night I expected anything to happen. There were a lot of wild rumours. On that day I was thinking about crossing the nearby Tanzanian border by bicycle or foot. But as I was told that there were people fighting in this area I decided to stay where I was.

The next few days I couldn't sleep well at night. Though it was quiet during the day; there was still a lot of tension visible. People armed themselves with machetes, sticks, bow and arrow. All roads were blocked with stones by angry, frustrated ODM voters. In Migori, a small town, about 20 km away the situation was worse. A lot of looting was going on, there were a number of casualties and people were stuck in their homes running out of food. I was told there were more policemen than people.

We too were trapped in our little village. No public transport. Blocked roads. Most of the Maasai people with their bordering land just a few hundred meters away were even voting for the opposition's party and the few kikuyu people have already moved away. So everybody told me, we would be safe here in the rural. Even my host mother told me: "Yes, we don't go out - we are safe. It is hard to fight people inside their homes. And if you once wake up at night and I say: "Hide under your bed" - we hide under our beds." Although I didn't know how serious she was with that statement, it didn't make me feel safe at all. All prices became double or more and stored food was running low.

This crisis makes things already bad worse. It is exasperating.

Almost two weeks later, most road blocks were removed, live and businesses have almost come back to normal. So I grabbed my chance and hopped over the Tanzanian border to Mwanza. There is still a lot of tension, because there's still no political solution available. Once more, rallies from the opposition are set for this week. So I continue waiting, hoping that things will be ok soon to return and continue my work.

Kenya, 16/01/2008

9. African foreigners in South Africa: from obvious tensions to shameful violence

In 2005, while I was studying in a little South African town, I could already notice some tensions towards foreign students: several times, cars matriculated from Zimbabwe were damaged within the campus! I couldn't understand why people who are educated would commit racist crimes. A Zimbabwean friend explained to me that he felt resented by his black South African classmates, as most Zimbabwean students got the best marks. Indeed, Zimbabwe used to have the best school system in Africa, and most Zimbabweans are very well educated and speak excellent English, whereas black South Africans have been kept undereducated during the apartheid regime until 1994.

Two years later, I'm back in SA, in Cape Town. The first thing I noticed was that there were lots of foreigners in this city! Almost every time I was in the train, reading Francophone magazines, my neighbour would read it with me, as there as many Congolese refugees in SA. Thousands of Mozambicans, Somalians, Malawians, Zimbabweans, Congolese, etc. found asylum in SA, escaping from famine, war, political oppression or poverty. South Africa is indeed a strong economical power in Africa, a state of law still in peace (for the moment): all good reasons to find a shelter here.

Many Mozambicans would work in the mines, most Somalians would run businesses, and most Congolese would be car watchers. Many of them were well educated and were looking for better jobs, but in order to survive, would accept any job at any salary.

And this is part of the problem. They are now accused by black South Africans to take their jobs and to keep salaries low by accepting to work at any cost. With 40% of unemployment (officially 25%), South Africa struggles to alleviate poverty, and the low education standards of many black South Africans (which are the results of the apartheid regime) represent a big obstacle to the improvement of the situation.

So, when food prices increased, and many families weren't able to eat enough, what had so far been "somehow tolerated" became unbearable, and some hungry, angry, desperate people went as far as beating, burning, killing foreigners (apartheid taught them well...), looting their shops, and kicking them away from their communities. As a result, almost all foreigners escaped and refugee camps were created.

I volunteered and visited some refugees in Soetwater refugee camp a few times before my voluntary service was over. They were shocked, desperate, living in poor conditions, between a rock and a hard place: they couldn't go back home, but couldn't go back to their communities either, it would have been too dangerous.

At the time I am writing, almost 2 months later, the situation is the same for them. The UN finally intervened (after Mbeki's denial of the crisis situation...), but what they provided is apparently still not enough to comply with Human rights of refugees.

What just happened in SA, is for me what is soon going to happen to us (Europeans) if we carry on leading unfair economical and political rules. For instance, if we carry on providing low price food thanks to our agricultural subsidies and at the same time forbid African states to subsidize their own agriculture, we'll just kill their economies, leading many people to seek for asylum in rich countries. But when resources and employment will become scarce, as it is starting now, the same kind of violence against foreigners is doomed to happen in our - so far - peaceful societies.

If the rules were fair for all countries in the world, international aid would be much less needed, and much less Africans would need to look for asylum in other countries.

10. Final Meeting in Berlin



The final meeting of the Voluntary Service took place again in Berlin where 14 of the 17 volunteers of the project met for three days, 05 – 08 of June 2008. Most of them had not seen each other since the last common training in Berlin in September 2007. Two of the volunteers could not attend this reunion due to visa or university issues. One prolonged his stay in the host country for some weeks to finish his project.

The main topic of the meeting was the overall and personal evaluation of the intercultural and voluntary

service experience during the exchange period as well as the preparation of the “coming-home”-process. Of course the exchange of experiences among the volunteers was also important, to see the similarities and differences of the lived moments.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TRAINING

Project presentations:

The focus of the first day was on the presentation and evaluation of the project the volunteers worked in. Each of them was asked to prepare a small presentation on the philosophy, the structure and target group of their projects as well as their specific tasks and achievements. The presentations were photographed and recorded on video and can be seen in the annex of this documentation.

Personal Evaluation:

Every volunteer designed a “Poncho” - a flipchart paper with a hole for the head to be put over as a poncho – about the personal experiences and their analysis. Here some of the results:

- good moments / achievements: Self fulfilment, riding the bicycle (although at home just for kids), music, laughing, hospitality, working with “my” children, nice landscape and beaches, personal achievements in the project, the weather, the food, host family as “my” family, intercultural learning, internet (UK).
- bad moments / difficulties: Misunderstandings due to cultural differences, racism, language barrier, very touchy people, justice, value system, some people wanting money from you just because you are white (white = rich), communication/way of talking, traffic/public transport and noises, pollution/garbage, mosquitoes, spitting (Finland), visa problems (Italy, Mozambique, Austria), time management, post election (Kenya).
- What astonishing and surprising situations did you experience that are related to major cultural differences as compared to your home country?: Sensation of being attractive because of white skin: “White person – do you want to marry me?”, “I love you!”, crowds of people on the streets, squares and transportation means, the food (Europe, Africa), image of curly or straight hair: for black Africans straight is beautiful, whereas in Europe curly is beautiful, driving habits, hitting children, segregation of the people (mainland – island in Nigeria / Lagos), smoking (for women), openness (e.g. on sexual topics)



(Austria), individualism (Europe), indirect criticism, receiving a friend's baby to take back to Europe for a better future, Sauna (Finland).

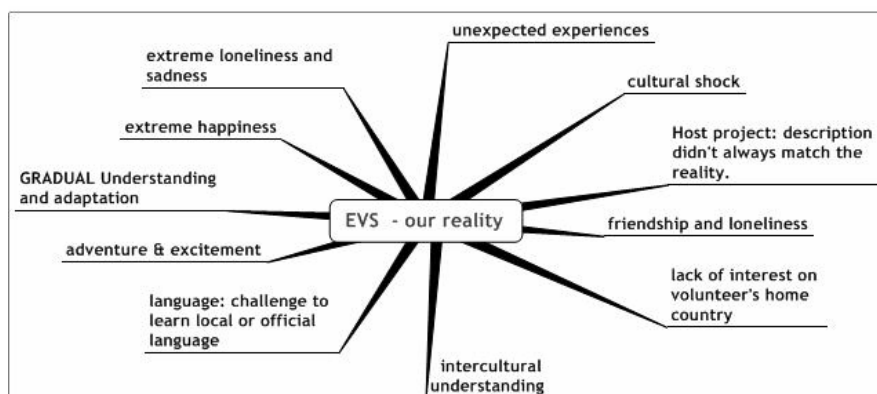
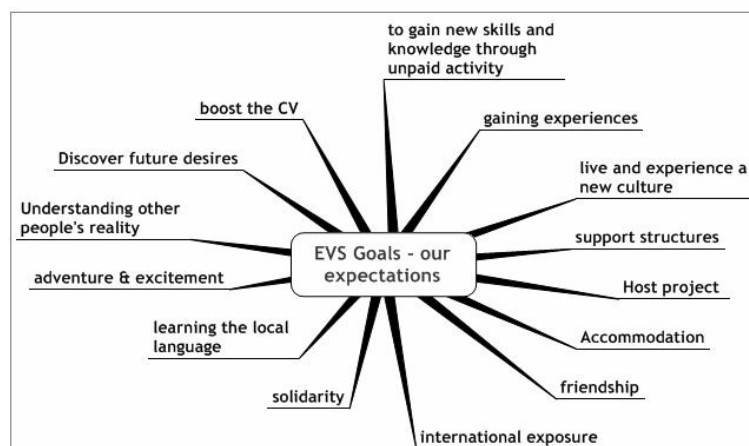
- d) Did you face any major intercultural problems or did you adapt easily? : to ask permission when you want to do or have something (in Italy), prejudices, black and white people cannot have peace together (South Africa), justice system (Africa), time, expressions, other gestures in different communities.



Overall EVS Evaluation:

In form of a scale from positive to negative different trainings and support structures of the European Voluntary Service were measured and evaluated: Pre-departure training, On-Arrival training, Language tutoring, Mid-term evaluation, Follow-up meeting and Support structure (Sending and host co-ordinating organisations, host project (Supervisor), international co-ordinator).

In a second step the volunteers drew two mind-maps: One on the goals and their expectation of the EVS programme and another on the reality of their experience with EVS.



In general they were all very satisfied with the programme.

The participants also gave recommendation to improve the EVS programme, for example: to make it more visible among young people and to have a language course before departure for non English speaking countries.

Returning Home: In this session we concentrated on the process of returning home after this experience and the different personal perspectives. In pairs the participants put their “coming-home” into a statue and presented it to the group. Together we exchanged ideas about returning home, the different feelings, fears and expectations vis-à-vis reintegration in to the family, friends, work or educational environment. The trainers explained the possible reverse culture adaptation process that could be somewhat similar to the one experienced while abroad. One normally does not expect it to happen as the home country is the known and accustomed one therefore it can be especially surprising to the

returning person if it does happen.



11. Final Conclusion

It was the first time that the International Cultural Youth Exchange – ICYE – sent many young people in exchange between Africa and the European Union via the European Voluntary Service (EVS). 17 volunteers travelled abroad and worked in local projects on social inclusion, five persons from African countries and 12 from the EU.

After reading all these testimonies, inputs and thoughts about their experiences and after having done the last Final Evaluation Meeting with them we can say that this programme was a success. All the volunteers mentioned this EVS as an enriching and fulfilling experience they would never want to miss. Although experiencing hard and difficult times, facing problems and misunderstandings (time management, religion, family concepts, privacy, colour, openness, gender roles to name only some), being alone and far from home in a completely different environment (already starting with the skin colour from first view) they realised that this was an incomparable and life-long-influencing experience: gaining self-confidence, patience, trust, independence, work experience, initiative, a new language, knowing one's limits better and being able to cope with challenges and obstacles. Some volunteers mentioned that they learned to understand themselves better, one's own identity, where they come from and what they want to keep as essential for them. Before leaving for a host country many participants said that they wanted to go to Africa to help the local people. Reading those testimonies you understand that the learning- and helping process was rather more on their side than on the other. They could know new cultures and environments and how to adapt to those, getting a wider view and respect of life, view points and differences which is an incredible intercultural



learning award. Most of these outcomes you cannot really be measured or put into a diploma. They are individual, non-formal and have a great impact on the personal behaviour and character of the persons who have experienced them.

Volunteering was mentioned as a good and useful way of getting these experiences. First it offers the opportunity to be part of a group of international volunteers. But also volunteers have a “free spirit” of working without wanting anything in return. At the same time they receive so much from the other side, make it all worth

doing it. Most of the participants now, also see better options for the future (work, studies, direction where to go, to boost their CV).

“[...] thanks to everyone allowing me to have the most wonderful, fulfilling experience. It really has been the best time and I really appreciate it. [...] The EVS was an excellent opportunity to experience new cultures and environments. It allowed me to work in a new field which I hope to continue and a new part of the world to where I hope to return” (Steward, British volunteer in Mozambique).



13. Annex

An Article of Tarek Farwati in a youth magazine of Vienna

KENIA - Mit der Tafel im Rücken

Autor: Tarek Farwati

Foto: Tarek Farwati

Auf einem weißen Fleck auf der Landkarte lebe ich jetzt als Freiwilliger. Abends kann man noch das Wetterleuchten am Horizont sehen, das der Lake Victoria aus den Wolken kitzelt. Nyanza Province, der Teil im Westen Kenias, den Touristen höchstens als „wohl irgendwo weit weg von den Safari Reservaten und Strandhotels“ vermuten würden. Der nächste größere Ort und Streifen Asphalt: 25km oder eine Stunde entfernt, erreichbar auf einer „Straße“, die einem die Plomben aus den Zähnen schüttelt. Und doch ist die Schlammpiste wohl nicht von findigen Zahnärzten angelegt worden, denn es gibt hier gar keine. Überhaupt gibt es hier nicht eben viel. Zumindest aus der Sicht eines Europäers. Supermarkt? Natürlich, 115km Richtung Nordnordwest. Strom? In einigen Lehmhütten in den Dörfern bisweilen, montags eher nicht. Fließwasser? Flusswasser. Autos? Ja, die gibt es. Ca. im 30 Minuten Takt brettert ein Fünftürer (oder was davon übrig ist) mit zumindest 10 Leuten über die Schlaglöcher. Sind es dann mal 13, hab ich bisweilen nur mehr neben zwei anderen Fahrgästen im Kofferraum Platz. Das macht aber nichts, denn nach vorne durch die Windschutzscheibe schauen will man dann eh doch lieber nicht.



„Mzungus“

Foto: Tarek Farwati



Ich hab's mir als „Mzungu“ („Europäer“ in der lokalen Sprache Swahili) wieder einmal gerichtet: Ich wohne in einer der wenigen Behausungen aus festen Ziegeln und die Pumpe, die die erdbräune Brühe, die manche hier als Trinkwasser bezeichnen, ans Tageslicht befördert, steht nur ein paar Schritte weit entfernt. Fließwasser oder Strom gibt es zwar nicht, aber dafür ein „Badezimmer“ im Haus: vier Wände und ein Bottich mit Wasser. Vor ein paar Wochen hab' ich mir sogar eine Dusche gebastelt: Ein 5-Liter-Kanister, der Boden entfernt, verkehrt rum aufgehängt, lässt bei halb aufgedrehtem

Plastikverschluss das Wasser angenehm über den Bauchansatz tröpfeln. Luxus eben. Heute muss ich mal wieder früh zur Schule. Einige Jahre ist es her, seit ich nicht mehr die Schulbank drücke, und damals habe ich gehofft mich nicht jemals wieder deswegen aus dem Bett quälen zu müssen. Vor ein paar Wochen noch hab' ich mir nicht träumen lassen, dass ich das Innere einer Schulklasse länger als 10 Minuten zu Gesicht bekommen sollte. Und doch bin ich nicht unglücklich: Denn die Perspektive hat sich geändert: Zum ersten Mal in meinem Leben hab ich den ganzen Unterricht lang die Tafel im Rücken.

„Howayou, howayou?“

Foto: Tarek Farwati

Die Gitarre unterm arm stapfe ich im Morgennebel den Hügel zur Dorfschule hoch. Die übliche Horde meiner kleinen Freunde klebt mir dicht an den Fersen. „Howayou, howayou?“ rufen sie mir kichernd zu. Zwecklos. Nachdem ich sie 15mal darüber informiert habe, dass es mir äußerst gut geht, wollen sie immer noch erneut wissen, wie's um mein Befinden steht. Das nenn' ich Höflichkeit. Heute bin ich guter Laune. also setze ich mich auf einen Stein und warte, bis mich eine neugierige Menge umringt hat. Dann stimme ich ein Lied an. Unwillkürlich schramme ich ein paar Akkorde und improvisiere ein paar Zeilen Gesang in ihrer Luosprache. Das gibt ein Gejohle und Gelächter und große Kinderaugen und halboffene Münder staunen nicht schlecht darüber, welche seltsamen Klänge dieser Blasshäuter von sich gibt. Punkt 8 Uhr stehen wir, Schüler, Lehrer, Direktoren alle stramm wie Zinnsoldaten vorm Fahnenmast. Eine gewisse militärische Feierlichkeit sollte schon an unserer Haltung erkennbar sein, denn nun wird die Nationalflagge gehisst. Nach der obligatorischen Strafpredigt der Schulobrigkeiten beginnt meine erste Unterrichtsstunde. Englisch in der Sekundarschule. Um die öde Grammatik mit den Teenagern diesmal



spielerisch zu üben, habe ich ein paar Zettel ausgeteilt, beschriftet mit verschiedenen Fragewörtern. Jeder muss mir nun damit eine (grammatikalisch korrekte) Frage stellen. Nach ein paar Durchgängen wird die Sache amüsant, weil die Schüler die Idee entwickelt haben, mir damit unter dem Vorwand etwas zu lernen, persönliche Fragen zu stellen. Da wird viel gelacht und die Schüler bringen mich mit den unmöglichsten Fragen ganz schön ins Schwitzen. Am Ende der Stunde kommt einer der Schüler mit seinem Heft zu mir und fragt, ob ich seinen Aufsatz Korrekturlesen könnte. In der Pause verscheuche ich erst mal die Hühner, nebst Küken, aus dem Lehrerzimmer und mache mich dann an die Verbesserung seiner Kurzgeschichte. Es ist wieder eine dramatische Episode aus dem kenianischen Alltag, die ein Schüler auf diese Weise verarbeitet.

Letzte Woche habe ich die Schüler mit meinem heiß begehrten Citybike über den Campus kurven lassen. Dabei sind die Schülerinnen etwas zu kurz gekommen. Deshalb habe ich den heutigen Montag kurzerhand zum „Girl's Bicycle Day“ erklärt. Es ist schon zum Zerkugeln, den zum Teil etwas ungeübten Mädchen zuzusehen, wie sie über das Fußballfeld eiern. Da wird eifrig angeschoben, instruiert und in die Hände geklatscht.

Kleine Erfolge

Foto: Tarek Farwati



Nachmittags halte ich eine Musikstunde mit einer Klasse der Primarschule. Als ich ins dunkle Klassenzimmer komme, blitzen mir mehr als 50 Kinderaugenpaare entgegen. Ich merk es ihnen an, dass sie ganz aufgeregt sind. Viele Gesichter lächeln mich erwartungsfroh an. Als bei „If you're happy and you know it“ unzählige kleine Kinderarme wild durch die Luft rudern und die Wände vom stampfen zu wackeln beginnen, sind sie in ihrem Element. Nach generell viel Zweifeln wird mir in solchen Momenten bewusst, dass ich etwas verändern kann. Angesichts der erdrückenden Hoffnungslosigkeit, der unzähligen Missstände hier, muss man mit kleinen Erfolgen zufrieden sein. Mit einem Kinderlächeln zum Beispiel. Am Ende der

Stunde klatschen wir alle vor Begeisterung. Die Kinder, weil sie so viel Spaß gehabt haben. Ich, weil diese Kinder, die sonst nicht viel zu lachen haben, soviel Enthusiasmus und Freude zeigen können.

Zuhause erwartet mich schon mein Gitarreschüler Collins. Er ist 15 Jahre alt, Vollwaise und sehr wissbegierig. Innerhalb kürzester Zeit hat er gelernt eine Handvoll Akkorde zu spielen. Heute kann er schon ein Lied begleiten. Und geschrieben hat er selbst auch gleich eins. Der Text handelt von seiner zum Teil deprimierenden Lebensgeschichte und schließlich davon, wie sehr er sich über den Gitarreunterricht freut. Als ich heute zum ersten Mal Collins' Tante besuche ist sie ganz aus dem Häuschen. Sie tanzt regelrecht vor guter Laune und erzählt mir aufgeregt, welche Freude Collins ihr mit seinem Gitarrespiel bereitet.

Zweitfrau

Foto: Tarek Farwati

Abends sitze ich wie immer im Schein der Petroleumlampe mit meiner Gastfamilie am Tisch. Mein Gastpapa ist heute nicht da. Er hat sich heute fürs Abendessen bei seiner Zweitfrau im Haus nebenan entschieden. Wenn ich mit Mama Eunita vorsichtig auf den Umgang mit der polygamen Lebensweise ihres Ehemannes zu sprechen komme, stößt sie einen Seufzer aus. Man merkt ihr an, dass diese Art Tradition sie nicht glücklich macht. Aber sie wird auch heute wieder stark sein. Das war sie gestern schon und wird sie auch morgen wieder sein. Sie muss es einfach. Denn wenn man sich um 16 Waisen kümmert, sie erzieht und sich Kopfzerbrechen um ihr Schulgeld macht und dabei die Hürden des afrikanischen Alltags nehmen muss, bleibt für schwache Momente nicht viel Gelegenheit mehr. „*A woman is strong, caring, confident, sensitive*“ lautet der Spruch, der eingerahmt über dem Fenster hängt. Für mich scheint es, als hätte der Verfasser dieses Textes dabei speziell an Gastmama Eunita gedacht. Als ich abends im Bett liege, weht der Wind ein paar Klänge vom Dorf herüber. Buschtrommeln und rhythmische Gesänge. Es sind Töne aus einer anderen Welt, die mir von Tag zu Tag vertrauter wird, und die ich wohl doch nie ganz verstehen werde. Ein Stückchen neuer Horizont, ein intensives Erlebnis und für mich ganz bestimmt als wertvolle Erfahrung in mein Gedächtnis eingebrannt.



<http://www.infoup.at/370.0.html>

Newsletter of ICYE Finland (Maailmanvaihto) – an article about Milla Puharinen



NEWS LETTER

MAAILMANVAIHTO RY:N JÄSENLEHTI #1/08



In this article Marika Heinonen tells about her visit to Milla's EVS-project. She visited a crèche and a shelter, both located in Mitchells Plain, Cape Town and also Milla's host family. Marika says it was a pleasure to visit a township and that she really enjoyed the warm welcoming. (January 08)

Volunteering 'olunteering

Kohtaamisia Etelä-Afrikassa

Unelma pääsystä Afrikkaan toteutui viime syksynä, kun opiskeluvaihtopaikka Etelä-Afrikan Port Elizabethissa varmistui. Lukukauden puolivälissä sain kuulla Maailmanvaihdon lähettämästä EVS-vapaaehtoisesta Milla Puharisesta, jonka vapaaehtoisprojekti sijaitsi Kapkaupungissa. Heti tavattuamme löysimme yhteisiä tuttuja Suomessa, ja maailman pienuus tuli taas todettua.

Lukukauden loputtua, ehdin viimein vierailulle Millan luokse, ja mieleenpainuvaksi kokemukseksi jäi vierailu Millan projektissa sekä isäntäperheessä. Oli mielenkiintoista nähdä Kapkaupungista muutakin kuin pelkät turistinähtävyydet, ja päästä vierailemaan yhteen monista "townshipeistä", Mitchell's Plainissä. Muutaman muun slummialueen nähneenä, odotin näkeväni ison hökkelikylän. Odotukset osoittautuivat kuitenkin täysin vääriksi, ja tunnin

bussimatkan jälkeen vastassa oli valoisa ja suhteellisen hoidettu esikaupunkialue.

Millan vapaaehtoistyöpaikka on päiväkodissa sekä hyväksikäytettyjen naisten ja lasten turvakodissa. Vastaanotto molemmissa paikoissa oli erittäin lämmin ja Millan opettamat suomalaiset lastenleikit olivat lapsilla jo hienosti hallussa! Päivä kului hujauksessa lasten kanssa piirtäessä sekä hippaa ja muita pelejä leikkiessä. Hienon päivän jälkeen ei voi muuta, kuin ihailia heidän uskomatonta elämänsennettaan. Kuinka sitä itse muistaisi iloita aina niistä kaikista pienimmistäkin ilonaiheista?!

Marika Heinonen

Kirjoittaja on Maailmanvaihdon hallituksen jäsen



Article of Raimonda Iskauskaitė in Lithuanian Newspaper

Lietuvės Nigerijoje dienoraštis: 12. Aš – ne motina Teresė (nuotraukos)

Raimonda Iskauskaitė 2008-05-02

Prieš išvažiuodama turėjau du tikslus: įgyti patirties, kurios negalėjau gauti Lietuvoje ir pateikti kiek imanoma daugiau informacijos apie Nigeriją, kurios pati negalėjau rasti, arba rastoji manęs netenkino. Žmonėms, išgirdusiems sąvoką „savanorystė“ ir dar Afrikoje, labai dažnai tai siejasi su pasaulio gelbėjimu vienu ar kitu aspektu.

Aš – ne motina Teresė. Niekada net tyliai nesvajojau išgelbėti pasaulio ir niekada nemaščiau, kad turiu padėti vargšams Afrikos vaikams. Kai reikėjo rinktis projektą, atmečiau visus pasiūlymus, susijusius su tiesiogine pagalba, t.y. darbą našlaičių namuose, mokyklose ir su benamiais, gyvenančiais gatvėse, asocialiais žmonėmis.

Savanorystę aš šifruoju kiek kitaip, t.y. kaip darbą, kuris nėra materialiai atlyginamas. Aš pasirinkau pirmiausia pagalvojusi

apie patirtį, ir, jeigu tai prisidės prie kieno nors gyvenimo pagerinimo, – puiku! Man tikrai buvo nesvarbu, kur atliksiu savanorišką tarnybą – Afrikoje, Azijoje ar kurioje nors turtingoje Europos šalyje, aš tik norėjau dirbti ir keliauti. Taip aš ir atsidūriau Nigerijoje.

Projektas, kurį gavau, daugiau ar mažiau atitiko mano lūkesčius. Dirbu „Action health incorporated“ (AHI) nevyriausybiniėje pelno nesiekiančioje organizacijoje, kurios tikslas yra sudaryti visas galimybes jaunimui gauti reikiamos informacijos ir gebėti priimti atsakingus sprendimus, susijusius su jų sveikata bei vystymusi.

Viena iš pagrindinių užduočių – lytinis švietimas ir supažindinimas su reprodukcinė sveikata. Organizacija dirba šešias dienas per savaitę daugiausia su 9–24 metų žmonėmis, kurie gauna informaciją, priklausomai nuo jų amžiaus grupės. Šie žmonės gali ne tik gauti teorinę informaciją, bet ir AHI klinikoje pasitikrinti sveikatą bei sužinoti savo ŽIV statusą ar atlikti kitus ginekologinius testus. AHI taip pat organizuoja mokymus mokytojams ar žemesnio lygio medicinos darbuotojams, kurie dirba su jaunimu.

Daugiau ar mažiau visi savanoriai žino, koks darbas jų laukia. Prieš pasirašant projekto sutartį visi savanoriai gauna būsimo darbo aprašymą, tačiau kaip ir viskas Nigerijoje, taip ir kontraktai gali netikėtai būti pakoreguoti.

Nors ganėtina aiškiai įsivaizdavau, koks darbas manęs laukia, vos tik atvykusi sužinojau, kad jau iškilio kažkokių komplikacijų, ir mano projektas buvo pakeistas. Negana to, man, atvykusiai į savo naująją darbovietę, niekas nedavė jokių konkrečių pareigų. Jų globėjiškas tonas ir nenorėjimas manęs pervarginti po mėnesio tapo nepakeliamas, nes nieko rimto neveikiau.

Pradėjau skųstis, tačiau atrodė, kad aplinkiniai nenori pasidalyti darbu, lyg kėsiničiausi iš jų atimti paskutinį duonos kąsnį. Mano vadovas irgi vis aiškino, kad labai greitai jis duos man darbo tiek, kad neturėsiu kada net galvos pakelti. Kantriai palaukiau dar mėnesį, tačiau situacija nepagerėjo, kol galiausiai vienas direktorių mane pastebėjo padedant dirbti kito departamento darbuotojai. Nuo tada pradėjau gauti naujų užduočių ir dabar esu pakankamai užsiėmusi

Dirbu penkias dienas per savaitę nuo 8 ryto iki 5 valandos vakaro. Priklausau tyrimų ir dokumentacijos departamentui, kuris atsakingas už žurnalo paaugliams leidimą, AHI publikacijas, biblioteką ir AHI tinklalapį. Esu vyresniojo programų vykdytojo asistentė. Padedu rašyti straipsnius jaunimo žurnalui, raportus, tenka peržiūrėti AHI leidžiamas publikacijas, žurnalus, tinklalapį ir pateikti komentarus, pastabų, papildyti naujomis idėjomis. Padedu organizuoti skaitymo konkursus ir priklausau kasmetinio festivalio jaunimui organizavimo komitetui. Be viso to, nuo vasario iki balandžio mėnesio turėjau studentų klasę, kuriuos mokiau kompiuterinio raštingumo.

Mano darbovietė, atsižvelgiant į Nigerijos sąlygas ir tai, kad ji pelno nesiekianti organizacija, yra turtinga. AHI turi trijų aukštų pastatą, susidedantį iš dviejų sektorių, be to, šiuo metu yra statomi svečių namai. Beveik kiekviename kabinete yra oro kondicionieriai. Pusė darbuotojų šiais metais gavo naujus kompiuterius. Didžioji dalis kompiuterių yra prijungti prie interneto. Nuo pat mano darbo pradžios neturiu nuolatinės sėdėjimo vietos, tačiau turiu galimybę beveik kiekvieną dieną naudotis internetu, kuris, nors ir labai lėtas (1,2 MB nuotrauką išsiųsti užtrunka 8–15 min.), vis dėlto suteikia galimybę pasidalinti naujienomis ir žiniomis apie Nigeriją su Lietuva.

Savanorių projektai skirtingi ir priklauso nuo savanorio pageidavimų bei norų ir koordinuojančios organizacijos galimybių surasti darbą, esant adekvačioje aplinkoje.

Prieš kelis mėnesius viena savanorė iš JAV baigė savo projektą AHI, kur praleido beveik metus. Ji padėjo organizuoti kasmetinę konferenciją, susijusią su lytiniu švietimu Afrikoje. Savanorė iš Danijos dirba su viena nevyriausybine organizacija, kuri atsakinga už naujų projektų pateikimą švietimo srityje. Kitų savanorių projektai dažniausiai susiję su vaikais. Tina, Kristina ir Dženi jau paliko Nigeriją. Kristina ir Dženi dirbo vaikų darželyje, o Tina – našlaičių namuose.

Vasario pradžioje atvyko trys naujos savanorės. Uosa iš Švedijos dirba našlaičių namuose, Miriam iš Vokietijos – tame pačiame darželyje, kur dirbo Kristina, o Katherina, taip pat atvykusi iš Vokietijos, dirba su aklais žmonėmis. Jeigu manęs kas paklaustų patarimo apie savanorystę Nigerijoje, tikrai nepulčiau įrodinėti nei teigiamų, nei neigiamų dalykų. Visi mes esame skirtingi, su skirtingais poreikiais ir skirtingu pasaulio suvokimu. Nigerija – ypatinga šalis, kuri pareikalauja daug nervų, energijos ir ištvermės. Jei reikėtų dar kartą važiuoti – nevažiuočiau, bet, manau, niekada nesigailėsiu, kad pasiryžau metams važiuoti į Nigeriją savanoriauti, o ne į Angliją uždarbiauti, nes tai, ką gaunu, – neįkainojama patirtis.

To find in: <http://www.lrytas.lt/-12096399361207370511-p1-Kelion%C4%97s-Lietuv%C4%97s-Nigerijoje-dienora%C5%A1tis-12-A%C5%A1-ne-motina-Teres%C4%97-nuotraukos.htm>

TRANSLATION

Lithuanian girl's diary in Nigeria: 12. I am not Mother Theresa

Before going to Nigeria, I had two goals:

- to get experience that I could not get in Lithuania and
- to provide as much information as possible, which would be different from popular media reports.

Voluntary service conceptions (especially in Africa) is usually associated with a "world rescue".

I am not Mother Theresa. I have never even silently dreamed about world rescue and never thought that I have to help poor African kids. When I had to choose the project, I rejected all projects related with direct help: work at orphans' home, at schools, with homeless or asocial people.

Voluntary service I decipher in different way. I understand it as work, that it is not paid. I was thinking about the experience I am going to gain and if it helps anyone, it will be just an extra bonus. I really did not care where to do my voluntary service: Africa, Asia or any rich European country, I just wanted to work and to travel. That's how I appeared in Nigeria.

The project that I got was more or less what I wanted. I was working in non – governmental, non – profit organization called Action Health Incorporated (AHI). AHI is concerned about the prevailing appalling status of adolescent reproductive and sexual health and youth development.

One of the main tasks in the organization is – sexual education. AHI works six days a week. Target group is 9 – 24 years old people, which get information according to their age. Visitors can get concerning information as well as check their health or to find out their HIV status. AHI provides peer educators trainings and trainings for teachers and nurses that work with youths.

All volunteers more or less get information about the job they are going to do, because they are provided with this kind of information before they sign the contract. But if you get project in Nigeria it is a different case. Everything can be changed the last minute.

Before leaving I had a clear description of my project, but when I reached the country, I was told that my project had been changed, because of some unknown complications. More over, when I finally reached my new working place, no one wanted to give me any assignments. Their custodial tone and worries about not overstressing me became insupportable, because I did not have anything serious to do.

I started to complain, but it seemed that my colleagues did not want to share their work, like I wanted to take over their duties. And my supervisor was telling me that very soon he will give me so much to work, that I will even cry. I was patiently waiting one more month till one day I accidentally met one of the executive directors and was asked about my work. I told the truth and situation became better.

I was working five days a week from 8am till 5pm. I was placed in Resources and Documentation unit, which is responsible for publishing youth magazine "Growing up", AHI publications, library and AHI website. I was working as an assistance of senior program officer. I helped to write articles for the "growing up" magazine, reports, reviewed AHI publications, magazines, website and contributed all new projects with new ideas. I helped to organize "Read me" competition and was a member of annual "Teenage Festival of Life" committee. Aside from that, I was attending computer class students where had delivered basic knowledge of *Microsoft Office*.

Knowing the situation in Nigeria, my working place as non – profit organization was quite rich. AHI has three floors building that combine two sectors and one not finished guest house. Almost all offices have air conditioners. All workers got new computers this year and half of them are connected to internet. I have never had a steady working place, but I could browse almost every day, even internet is so slow that to send 1,2MB photos takes 8 – 15 minutes. Even though, it was the only way to reach with my family and my readership.

Voluntary service's projects are very different the same way all volunteers are different. The choice depends on individual requirements and sending organization abilities to find projects.

You can read more articles of Raimonda Iškauskaitė published in Lithuanian Magazines on the following page:

<http://www.lrytas.lt/-11913841801190872629-p1-Kelion%C4%97s-Lietuv%C4%97s-Nigerijoje-dienora%C5%A1tis-Protu-nesuvokiama-Afrika-nuotraukos.htm>

An article about Julie Marchand in a South African newspaper, November 2007

Tuesday 27 November 2007

NEWS

People's Post Page 9

Frogs' legs for anyone?

"BONJOUR. Mon appelle Gadicja. Je suis 5-ans. Je viens d'Ocean View."

For those of us not fluent in the language, this would be how a five-year-old girl from Ocean View would introduce herself in French.

And by the looks of things, residents and visitors to the area should get used to the idea of being addressed in a foreign language by some of Ocean View's little ones.

Children from Aquila Pre-primary School have been practising saying *bonjour* and *voulez vous* for nigh on two months now as part of a language and cultural exchange programme called Big things begin little, says project coordinator, Chantel Daniels.

"The main objective of this project is to teach a new language to children between the ages of five and six to liberate them from being stereotyped as isolated.

We hope to broaden the minds of the children and make them aware of countries outside of South Africa."

According to Daniels, the project was conceptualised during an international Migration and Language seminar hosted in Geneva, Switzerland, earlier this year.

The idea that South African children, especially children from poorer areas, grow up with a sense self-imposed isolation that limits their growth potential, was something the International Conference of Volunteers, working with the Volunteer Centre in Cape Town, felt a burning need to address.

"It is our duty to make opportunities available to these children, and not to lose them to the negatives of the world.

We aim to empower them and make them aware that they have a future with indefinite possibilities," Daniels says.

And in the meantime the pre-schoolers,

under the tutelage of Julie Marchand, a French teacher who hails from France, are having a ball, school principal Mrs Warries says.

"They are given French language and cultural lessons once a week for one to two hours a day.

"They are really enjoying it and I believe the project will set out what it aims to do."

If the project proves a success, it should be expanded to other areas, Daniels says. Aquila is currently one of only two pre-primary schools benefiting from the project.



A taste of France: Julie Marchand with her learners from Aquila Pre-primary School.
Photo: Supplied