



# Worlds of Experience

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### **Young Leaders for Social Change: Entrepreneurship through Volunteering**

Dear friends,

Social entrepreneurship has gained significant prominence over the past decade as it supports new ideas, a sense of initiative and creativity, particularly in times of economic instability when the need for alternatives to dominant economic models and systems is growing. In youth and voluntary work, social entrepreneurship has the potential to drive young people to creativity, innovation and participation, and to engage with the local community for the volunteers' own holistic development and for the collective sustainable growth of the community.

The 50<sup>th</sup> issue of the ICYE Federation Newsletter focuses on social entrepreneurship through volunteering. It shows how the volunteers of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project **Young Leaders for Social Change: Entrepreneurship through Volunteering** are observing, learning and working with local communities to implement small projects and actions with a lasting impact on the environment and the livelihood of marginalised communities around the world.

In **Volunteers Voices**, we are pleased to present articles by 11 volunteers who describe their work with the local communities and their personal and professional growth through this volunteering experience.

**ICYE News** feature: the “Inclusion market in Vienna” for people with disabilities in which Grenzenlos/ICYE Austria participated; “Youth Work Can Unite: International Volunteering to Enhance Solidarity and Fight Nationalism” - the newly approved Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project that will involve 12 international volunteers in campaigns/actions challenging racism and supporting refugees and asylum seekers; and the ICYE's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations that will take place in Hoi An, Vietnam, during the 31<sup>st</sup> ICYE general Assembly. One of the key events will be the handing over of the award of the short story writing competition “Tell a Life-Changing ICYE Tale”.

Wishing you an interesting reading, we look forward to receiving articles and pictures for the next issue of “Worlds of Experience”, dedicated to “Volunteering for the Environment”. Please send your contributions to [icye@icye.org](mailto:icye@icye.org), before 31 January 2020.

Warmest regards!

**ICYE International Office**

This and previous issues of “Worlds of Experience” can be viewed and downloaded from: [www.icye.org](http://www.icye.org).

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# Volunteers Voices

## **Political recycling** **Melina Godoy (Argentina)** Volunteer in Iceland

My name is Melina, I am from Argentina and I am in Iceland working on the projects of Red Cross, offering psychosocial support to unaccompanied teenagers seeking asylum, female refugees and asylum seekers, and as a support worker for people recovering from mental illness.

One of the first things I had to learn when I arrived was to recycle. Knowing Iceland, its customs and ways of doing things made me aware of the differences. I was not used to thinking twice about what I discard, but of course, I reflected, understood and implemented. In Argentina when social needs abound, social enterprises also arise, proposals are carried out and another wheel begins to turn, this time to the positive side. It makes me proud that there are always united and organized communities, especially in times of crisis. I also understood that Latin America does not have the economic stability and social and urban planning that exists in Iceland, because social projects do not have continuity after the change of political representatives.



Therefore, it is very difficult to have leaders who are concerned with fostering a real conscience as to why it is necessary to recycle, what happens when you do not do it, how many opportunities are lost in a poorly discarded product, much less the provision of tools to reverse it.

Here, social enterprises are a small circle, which fortunately have policies that encourage citizen participation, providing resources, support and knowledge necessary to carry out their own projects.

They are also strongly linked to innovation, as an example we have Brandur Karlsson, whom I had the pleasure of meeting. He is the founder of Frumbjörg, a centre of innovation and incipient incubation in Reykjavík that works side by side with disabled and elderly people focused on the development of next-generation social assistance and assistance technologies. Thus, through citizen participation, dissemination of new solutions and social innovation as a base, it seeks to improve well-being and quality of life and strengthen the economy.

I definitely have a lot to observe, learn and put into practice. Finding resources, creating networks and working together to solve the social problems that I see every day in my city and in many places are some of the opportunities that this great trip gives me and I do not plan to miss them.

## **Entrepreneurship adventure on high**

### **Danuta Chodakowska (Poland)** Volunteer in Ecuador

My name is Danuta Chodakowska and I am a volunteer in TECHO in Ecuador. There are around 104 million people living in poverty in Latin America. Extreme poverty means that your children are starving, do not attend school and spend the day with you on the streets, trying to sell some fruits. In the evening, you look for a place to sleep, possibly a dark corner of a road. In the night, a scream wakes you up; it is yet another homeless person being raped. My role as a volunteer is to support marginalised communities and provide the most disadvantaged with houses.



I had done some voluntary work before, but it is different to do it on another continent. Here, I went through a cultural shock within the very first month of my stay. This hard experience allowed me to grow and understand my colleagues. My management and marketing skills develop every day at work, the same with my Spanish language. I have grown the most by virtue of living and working in a new environment of a foreign country and the experience of changing my lifestyle entirely. The project is for eight months, but I wish to extend my stay to deepen my cultural understanding.

My presence in the organization, apart from leading a social entrepreneurship project, grants the organization crucial support during events together with everyday backing in the area of marketing and fundraising. My adventure with the project started with my visits to various communities that do not have access to basic services such as electricity and energy, water and sanitation, to see their everyday life and capacities. The most engaged community in my city, Quito, is located in the mountains on an altitude of 3 800 m a.s.l. near a touristic area of Ruco Pichincha. They had been producing food for sale and renting horses in the area, and were open to extending their services to provide for themselves. The community ideas for entrepreneurship were quite foggy and unrealistic, but the ambitions and resources were high, which made them a great match for the entrepreneurship project. As a result of a two-day workshop in the community, two different social entrepreneurship projects were decided upon - traditional snacks production and sale (caramelized peanuts, fried broad beans, and banana chips) and creating a camping zone near the touristic area. Apart from creating these new services, a crucial subject seemed to be a marketing strategy. A group of twelve interns from a local University have been involved, hence I have help with the project but I'm also responsible for team management. We have interlaced physical work on the camping zone to flatten the area with preparing snacks and running workshops. The work is organized in the form of communal work called minga - a strong tradition in Quechua communities.

My project, the social entrepreneurship adventure on high, has been organized in the mountains with a marginalised local community. As a volunteer, I was not only an everyday help with the organizational tasks, but also had my own project to keep track of, make decisions and push it forward. The effects of my project were visible through the community approach, social media coverage, and the formation of the camping zone. The project has exposed me to extreme poverty, new ways of working and cultural differences. I am enriched with new skills and a wider understanding of social stratification.

## How Volunteering benefits me

**Mai Lê (Vietnam)**

Volunteer in Slovakia

In Vietnam, I had worked in international volunteer service for 4 years. Yet, I had never experienced the life of a long-term volunteer. I decided to give it a try. Slovakia was my first option for a long-term volunteering project. Fortunately, I was chosen to be a part of the KERIC team in Cadca, Slovakia. This is an 8-month project and my main task is to work on education and youth development. I go to public school to teach English to primary school students. I also conduct the English lessons in KERIC to the youth and adults. Summer was the time that I could participate in a summer camp themed 'Survival' as one of the leaders. Realizing that I could contribute more to the community, I asked to be in the senior house once a week. I have the opportunities to meet a lot of Slovak elders, talk to them, dance with them, and we all laugh. Even though the language barrier can be one of the difficulties, it has not been a challenge for me.



I remember someone has said 'the love you take is equal to the love you make'. I truly believe in that, and what I have gained is not only love, but other valuable things. I can express myself, meet new people, make new friends, immerse myself in the intercultural environment and learn new skills. One of the best lessons for me is that I can learn about entrepreneurship all along the way. What I have gained in the past 4 months is valuable.



# Volunteers Voices

Volunteering has given me time and chances to experience, observe and practice. Whatever I do, I think more about the community and the people, which transform my thoughts from 'I' to 'WE'. I put myself in the others' shoes, see things from different perspectives, be it more critical, sensible and reasonable. I have more empathy with people even though I do not understand the language in some cases but I do believe that humans have hearts to feel and sense each other. I think this attitude supports me to start my new career with understanding and consideration.

I consider voluntary work as serious work too. Passion is necessary in all types of work. Finding a volunteer project that fits your personality and values can be as important as finding a career to choose in the future. When I like what I am doing, I will be able to do it well. Sometimes, I will need to motivate myself, but as long as I keep my passion for the work I choose, all will be good.

Through volunteering, I have learnt to listen to myself and to others. I am more patient in communicating with people and understanding their stories. This is one of the factors contributing a lot to communication skills. Through volunteering, I have learnt how to be a leader. I learnt to value team work and cooperation. I appreciate everyone's contribution and appreciate the outcomes of the team. Through volunteering, I have learnt the 'learning- by- doing' skill. I was trained to do my work, but the ability to self- learn, improve and find out my own way to work efficiently is vital.

For me, volunteering has been key to defining my professional and personal identity, as well as my career in the future. I reckon that my experience today will be a critical foundation for my success in the future.

## Lifelong learning in Langa

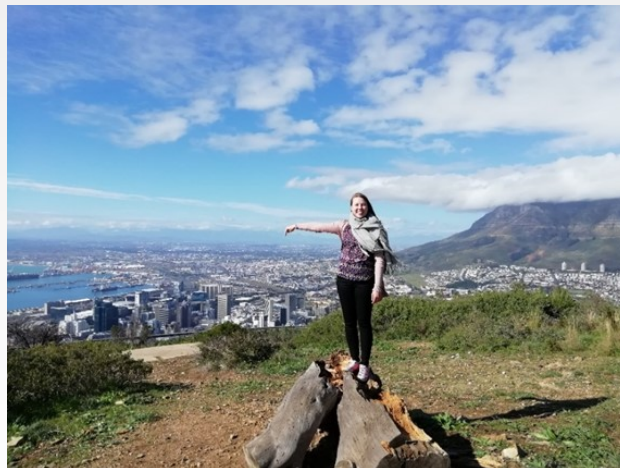
**Elli Ilona Korhonen (Finland)**

Volunteer in South Africa

First thing that I saw from the airplane window when arriving at Cape Town was the majestic Table Mountain framed by the beautiful blue ocean. I had no idea what to expect and it is safe to say that my time here has taught me more than I could have dreamed of during that moment when the airplane's tires hit the ground.

In Cape Town, I am placed in a non-profit organisation called Ikhaya Le Langa that promotes social enterprises throughout Social Enterprise Precinct model. It was founded by Tony Elvin in 2013 and it operates in Langa township, where I also live. Even though Langa has historical and cultural value and great opportunities, it is dealing with some major issues like high unemployment

rate, a lot of crime and violence, substance abuse and poor delivery services. In Cape Town, race also plays a significant role in how wealth is divided among citizens, and parts of apartheid history are still sadly present.



The goal of Ikhaya Le Langa is to create a better future for the people within the community through social enterprises using people, planet, profit (PPP) principles. Even though the organisation is business oriented many of its aspects are in fact educational, and it offers various programs, for example life skill trainings. It also provides people with access to services, like Wi-Fi, to help them find a livelihood.

I've really enjoyed working at Ikhaya Le Langa. Every day is different and not only has it taught me a lot about South Africa, social enterprises and day to day work in organisations, it has also allowed me to apply in practice my own interest for non-formal learning and intercultural competence. Also, Langa as a community has been nothing but welcoming and has taken me as a part of Xhosa traditions and lifestyle.

During my stay, I have been able to meet many new people and be part a lot of different tasks and projects. I have also worked with Volunteer Centre to create workshops that would enthuse locals to volunteer and to bring together international volunteers and local volunteer to learn, help and have fun.

I think the greatest learning experience for me has been working alongside the people of South Africa. It has been very inspiring to hear their life stories and their dreams for the future. I have also learned more about overcoming obstacles and issues and working around them. You can accomplish a lot with very little, if you are passionate about what you are doing.

In my opinion that is also what volunteering is all about. By giving some of your time and skills, you gain so much more than you could expect. International volunteering also creates opportunities to exchange ideas and skills,

for example new social enterprises, by creating means for intercultural encounters that might not have happened otherwise. This journey has definitely made an impact on my life and I hope that my time here and our teamwork has made an impact on someone else's as well. From time to time, it has been difficult but has also opened my eyes to make sure that I will continue working towards equality in the future.



Table Mountain can be seen from the window of my workplace as I write this article. My journey in South Africa has already passed its half milestone, and I am interested to see where these last months will take me.

## It's all about connecting

**Jennifer Soto (Honduras)**

Volunteer in Poland

Volunteering is a way of living, in which you team up with people from different backgrounds, ages, and even countries to work for a common objective. In this space, you learn how the community works, their strengths and weaknesses, and to live in harmony, you develop important skills and tools for daily life. On the other hand, entrepreneurship starts with a problem or need and an idea to solve it. So to make it happen, you need to work closely with the people and understand their real struggles to come up with an effective solution, and volunteering gives us that, the social compromise and the required skills; that's why it's the perfect training to become a social entrepreneur.

In my Polish community, Pułtusk, my volunteering tasks are quite diverse. Sometimes I attend activities for promoting local and international volunteering and managing social media and others, I go to schools with other volunteers to talk about our countries. I also work with seniors in a local day care centre and recently I started teaching kids some basic Spanish. Those different approaches and target groups have helped me to get to

know the community better and understand the cultural differences and similarities. It's important for the community to have more contact with foreigners, especially for the kids, to explore different traditions and customs. It is also important to integrate myself, talk with locals and join the different activities like concerts, picnics or just go to the supermarket or the nearest convenience store. Moreover, living with a host family was the best opportunity to gain more confidence and make this experience as smooth and interesting as possible. To live in a different society, on the other side of the world, helps me to rediscover my own abilities and strengths, gain new skills and perspectives, beat many stereotypes and grow as a citizen of the world. I realize that the worst problem is not knowing the language -you just need to be creative to communicate and take advantage of the resources available-, get lost in the city or make mistakes. The worst problem is to become paralyzed and do nothing when a challenge pops up.

So the social entrepreneurship project that I'm leading after living here for a few months is to build a small bartering and swapping community to get people together, talk and share ideas, opinions, tips and any kind of items to remind them that there are more options to live without consuming too much. Human beings have been exchanging goods since prehistoric ages and we still do, less frequently than before, because of our current and not-eco-friendly way of living. So, due to the economic and environmental problems we have now, it's a great opportunity to focus more on this practice and start consuming less, to reconsider our habits and their impact on the planet, particularly when it comes to clothes and fashion items. This is a global issue with very local solutions with long term big impact but with small, specific and immediate tasks and actions.



# Volunteers Voices

This experience has reminded me of those little projects I had in my mind a few years ago and it has motivated me to stay with them and even start new ones, thinking that, when it comes to social entrepreneurship, every action matters, every action counts. Volunteering is the spark that entrepreneurship needs to make it possible, and by exchanging and living as a responsible society, we'll help each other when it comes to economy and the planet; the main goal of this volunteering experience.

## Garden of Life

**Ronald Panny (Austria)**  
Volunteer in The Philippines

It has been 5 months since I arrived in the beautiful country of the Philippines, a country characterized by big trees, lots of exotic food, happy people and a friendly atmosphere. I live with a host family whose house is quite far from my workplace, but it doesn't matter if you live with such a lovely family. I work for BP Cebu Foundation Inc. (BPCFI) and BP or BUKAS PALAD means "open palms" in the local language; it's where I spent most of my time doing administrative tasks, visiting our beneficiaries and getting in touch with our local communities. BPCFI serves a total of 1500 families, where most of them are engaged in different projects created by our team and funded by our sponsors. One of our latest projects is our Urban Gardening project, wherein I am also actively involved as a social entrepreneur.



The Urban Gardening project of BPCFI officially started in May 2019 with the collaboration of our partners CARITAS Brescia and CAFEi (Communities for Alternative Food Ecosystems Inc.). With BP Cebu's backyard area as the venue for this pilot project, we gathered parents and students from various communities to participate in a

series of training seminars conducted by a local agriculturist who explained the science and the value in growing your own food. The training seminars touched on various topics such as permaculture, soil preparation, composting and organic farming methods, which proved to be vital in the successful planting of a variety of seeds and plants for the garden such as okra, tomatoes, eggplant, water spinach, wild cabbage and arugula. We then expanded the project to our housing project venues in Liloan, Cebu.



The plants in the garden are growing successfully and it has made an impact on our beneficiaries since some of them have started to grow their own garden at home and have even earned a small income from selling their produce. My goal is to harvest the yield in the coming months for personal use, and if we are able to produce more than we consume, we can try to sell the vegetables, so that our communities can earn extra income for their efforts. It feels good to be able to help people and at the same time grow personally through this volunteering experience. The Filipino culture is such that the people around are always ready to offer a helping hand even in the direst of circumstances, and this is very inspiring to witness.

My stay as a volunteer in the Philippines has had a high impact on my development, especially while getting in contact with unknown people, increasing my level of patience, finding my inner peace as well as increasing my knowledge of English. I can highly recommend anyone to push through the comfort zone and try a long-term stay as a volunteer in a foreign country!



## Sharing a chance with people

**Sebastián Paredes (Ecuador)**

Volunteer in Austria

My name is Sebastian and I have been volunteering in a residence for people with mental disabilities for some months now, a residence where I also live close to Vienna, Austria. These past months have been an interesting and enriching journey, full of new discoveries at the place where I daily work by assisting and helping with what I am capable of. Here, the clients of the residence are of different ages and have different conditions so everyone is unique in their way. On some days I feel there is too little time to do many things with all the clients. Sometimes it is like one activity can last hours without noticing. And sometimes I'm impressed by how many "small" things can be done and the time left to do other things.



Having knowledge of the German language has been a very useful tool as all the clients and most coworkers cannot speak English or Spanish. With this useful resource, I have been able to get in touch and in some cases create links with people. Plus, being in Austria has helped me to learn vocabulary and practice German in my daily life. Needless to say, the Austrian dialect also makes it interesting to keep learning German, with whole new and different words. At the same time, I have learned to be more empathic and open to people with disabilities; not everyone in the residence is able to speak or communicate their needs. This has also given me creativity to develop new ways of communicating with the clients, in a way that both they and I feel comfortable. Sometimes it is not just about words but eye contact and openness, making the other feel your intention.

Of course every now and then, everyone has good and not so good days. It is a normal thing to happen, where it is important to notice whether you should just let it be or take action. There are things that with some time go away and bring back the calm to the atmosphere again. There are also things that need to be taken care of be it with laughter, open ears or open arms. Learning to put oneself in their place is sometimes something mind blowing; to get to be full of curiosity, friendship, laughter, kindness and openness. That is one of the ways to enjoy

the daily routine, that in their eyes is life with a new day after another.

Social entrepreneurship relates to volunteering because the two of them give opportunities to help others, so both look to make a change for the better. The entrepreneur and the volunteer can generate a change that maybe they don't see, but the ones they are helping and getting in contact with would appreciate the fact that someone entered their normal routine and made a difference. Often it helps to listen to the community, having interest in knowing what they see, how they feel about something, and what could be changed or added. Making time for them is a thing they are very thankful for, because people don't always have the time to share and spend with them.

The social entrepreneurship project I am working is about making a Photo Gallery with pictures taken by the clients of the residence. With the help of some coworkers, this project aims at making people come and visit the gallery, looking at what the clients catch in a camera. The gallery will be presented in the vicinity of the residence, so that locals and visitors can also have a look and get to know what the clients of the residence can do. Besides, some of the clients could also be there to share their experiences; it depends on the mood of the clients. Previously I took part in some workshops and meetings to talk about social entrepreneurship, where other volunteer colleagues shared ideas, and we had a space to discuss the meaning of a social entrepreneurship. This helped me to get more into the idea of entrepreneurship through volunteering. It is a matter of initiative and daily work, looking at different aspects and defining details that will make the project a successful change that helps.

## The importance of volunteering

**Thorgeir Thorsteinsson (Iceland)**

Volunteer in Argentina

In a country where the economic situation at the moment is very unstable and future prospects are uncertain, one thing is clear. The need for a helping hand and togetherness have seldom been more important. Luckily, the Argentinian people are some of the kindest you will find and the amount of sharing is something I've never experienced before. Although many Argentinians have experienced similar times before, this is a first for the kids I've been working with in Las Tejedoras, in a very poor neighbourhood on the outskirts of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area. Economic difficulties usually hit the poor the hardest and for some of the people of the Ingeniero Budge neighbourhood, where also the family

# Volunteers Voices

I'm staying with lives, times are rough. For many years, some people in the neighbourhood have shown their incredible generosity by both giving their time and resources for the betterment of the local community. Kids of all ages can come there, get food and feel good doing the activities we plan with them and food packages are also distributed to families in need. The situation wasn't as bad four months ago when I arrived and we've seen an increase in kids attending, so it feels good when you see them go home with a smile on their face.

It is such a privilege to be able to go to another country and experience the culture, especially by living with an Argentinian family. You get a unique insight into the lives of ordinary Argentinians and hopefully do some good while you're at it. It is sometimes difficult talking to my friends here from the neighbourhood about my home country and the situation there, it almost feels embarrassing and I often wish they had the same opportunities as me. My experience here has made me realise how incredibly good we have it back home. It has opened my eyes to a lot of things, and although having spent a lot of time in Las Tejedoras, the main project about social entrepreneurship feels equally important.



Along with the Subir al Sur organization, we are planning events with the goal of strengthening volunteering in Buenos Aires as volunteering is an integral part of most societies and can bring incredible social benefits as well as professional benefits for people. Having a strong foundation of volunteers and other people involved is very important and with these events, we aim to spread the word to local people about the importance of volunteering work and helping in general. We hope to both educate and recruit more local people as volunteers, both incoming, as in for domestic projects as well as outgoing for projects abroad. The main target group is young people from ages 16 to 30 but recruiting mentors for volunteers and host families is also a big part of our goal. It is an integral part of strengthening the already existing infrastructure of volunteering organizations of Buenos Aires and we hope to build on the great work that has already been done.

Having now been here in Argentina for more than 4 months and being more than half way through my stay here, it is interesting to look back and think about what

has happened so far. Seeing and experiencing the contrast between this country and mine, a country that is quite isolated and very stable, has given me a different perspective and one can certainly see the importance and need volunteering has in a place like this. Especially living with a family in a neighborhood that has a very troubled past and still has a lot of issues gives a really interesting insight into the culture and lives of ordinary people. Also the incredible work going on in volunteering organizations everywhere. You see things on TV or read something online so you have certain expectations before you arrive to a place, but it is so different when you are actually there and meet and interact with the people. During my time here, not only have I learned the language and how to play Truco and drink mate like a true Argentinian, but most importantly I've learned the importance of sharing, helping, being thankful for and using what you have. These are some things that I can take back with me to my home country and share with people there, which will stay with me for the rest of my life.

## Volunteering: My New World Experience

**Damilola Adekanmbi (Nigeria)**  
Volunteer in Finland

Even though I had volunteered in Nigeria, the thought of being an international volunteer did not cross my mind until this opportunity came and I decided to go for it, with the main purpose of learning and making someone smile beyond the borders of Nigeria. I had my fears. Leaving my doting family, my country with good weather conditions and my ever-lively city for a new home, a very cold country and a small town with people whose language I do not understand was a big deal. I was scared of becoming a part of a new and completely different community, but I was interested. I wanted to know more about people living with disabilities, how to share in their world and the possibility of making a positive contribution.

Flying over 6,000 kilometers to Finland, I did not know what to expect but I anticipated a life-changing and incredible experience. Halfway into my volunteering period, I can say already that I made a good decision and what I anticipated is becoming a reality. I am getting all the beautiful experiences I longed for: a homely feeling in my host family, availability and friendship from my support person, love and acceptance from my co-workers and the people I meet in the community, the joyful expression on the faces of the workers with disabilities,



especially when we complete a project together (like weaving a customer's carpet), a new culture, food and lots more.

I volunteer in a town called Vihti at Kisälli, a handcraft workshop for people with disabilities and a different but interesting world for me. A world where I get to appreciate life more, a world where people are not limited by their disabilities but create beautiful pieces with their hands and teach me to do the same. A world that is exposing me to many abilities.



My special project is a handcraft on bead making. Together with my co-volunteers and Kisalli workers, we will make accessories from beads with the aim of selling them at the Christmas market of Vihti (one of the big events that brings Vihti's people together). They will be sold at discounts and affordable prices, as a way to encourage the people in the community to support Kisalli. We also plan to do publicity to create awareness for the workshop and Christmas market sales. I will also go to a kindergarten with my co-volunteers to educate the kids about intercultural learning experiences, to offer them a little exposure to different cultures and give them different perspectives about Africa and Nigeria.

I look forward to having more fulfilling experiences, learning with fun and someday hosting volunteers from other parts of the world.

## El Arca – my experience

**Emilia Haussteiner (Austria)**

Volunteer in Honduras

My name is Emilia Haussteiner and I am a nineteen-year-old girl from Austria. I have been in Honduras since April and will have volunteered for eight months in this project come December. I have learned a lot. First, what is my volunteer project? I am working at 'El Arca de Honduras', which is part of the international L'Arche federation represented in 37 countries around the world. Two of the 149 L'Arche communities are located in Honduras (Tegucigalpa and Choluteca). Founded in 1964 by Frenchman Jean Vanier, El Arca de Honduras essentially is an organization working for individuals with mental disabilities. In Tegucigalpa, it is a non-governmental, non-profit organization dedicated to providing housing and work for 17 residents, who I call *chicos*.

Together with ICYE Honduras, during my first days volunteering at El Arca, we carried out a workshop with the purpose of programming, designing, implementing and evaluating our social entrepreneurship project. We would like to see El Arca be more independent. In order to achieve this, we have been raising awareness of the support that El Arca offers to the *chicos*. We have created social network pages such as Instagram (@arcategus) and Facebook (Arca Tegucigalpa) where we publish the activities that the *chicos* carry out. The activities are distributed in different areas such as recreation, therapeutics, production and spiritual life. This is where we discover the gifts and talents of each disabled person so that we can value their abilities. In the first two weeks of November, we are going to post an announcement for the open house (social entrepreneurship fair) which will be held on November 29<sup>th</sup> 2019.



# Volunteers Voices

My colleagues at El Arca and the ICYE participants will publish this announcement to promote the open house. We will be discussing the topic of disabilities with friends, family and guests. We will also invite them to come to the open house and share the announcement on their social networks using the hashtags #Youth4Change and #JuntosSomosMásFuertes (#TogetherWeAreStronger). The open house will be in honour of El Arca's 50+ years of development. During the open house, the attendees will be able to get to know the organization's facilities and its different workshops. We will also sell artisan, such as bookmarks, "Catrachitos" (which are hand-sewn dolls), rice compresses, wooden-crafts such as keychains, among other things. We will have traditional food and beverages from Honduras and desserts from Austria. We will also enjoy live music and performances from our beneficiaries and guests. The most important part is interacting with all of the members of the organization. My intention is to make El Arca and the *chicos* known and to share my experience with those who visit us.



El Arca has several areas of focus, for example production and physical therapy workshops. However, all the workshops and activities are often interconnected and there is a strong link among all of the team members. I learn a lot from the *chicos* every day. They like to play, practice sports and be creative in craft workshops. They especially love to dance and do many other things that make them happy. Each one of them has a unique personality and that is why I never get bored of getting to know them more. To sum up, each beneficiary is different in their own way which is why we have to learn about their habits and characteristics in order to understand them better.

I am willing to help with any and all of the activities where they need me. For example, sometimes I help our physical therapist. This gives me the opportunity to share many special moments with the *chicos* in all their different activities.

As I mentioned at the beginning, El Arca provides housing and work. I have to confess, I lied. Because El Arca is not only that, but also a place of life purpose, peace, harmony, love and compassion. It is also a place of inclusion, friendship and fun. For the *chicos* of El Arca, it means home, family, unity and love. One of the things I have learned is to take advantage of life in any situation no matter how bad it may seem. I have had the opportunity to share with my colleagues at El Arca. They are truly an incredible team. I have learned so much from them - their attitude and approach to life. We laugh and joke a lot and that helps us to share even more. I have also learned to care about the people around me. In El Arca everyone is looking after one another and that creates deep human ties. Something inside of me has changed - to notice all of the small details and simply appreciate the moment.

## Small steps towards great change

**Magdalena Juchniewicz (Poland)**

Volunteer in Vietnam

I arrived to Hanoi in April 2019 to volunteer and to learn from my new coworkers, as well as to share my experience I have gained in Europe. As soon as I arrived, I was trying to adopt and to get to know better the reality I was in. I knew that the essential step of my volunteering experience would be to recognize the needs of Vietnamese youth I was going to work with. Together with my hosting organization we conducted a research based on which we could develop the programme which would best fit the needs and expectations of young people. We have noticed that they lack soft skills in the first place. That was the message which made me step in and use my previous experience related to Erasmus+. Since then I have lead several workshops, camps, meetings, activities based on non-formal education, where participants have gained and developed numerous skills and competences. Besides that, youth from Vietnam got a better view of volunteering opportunities and importance of those activities for individual development as well as development of the community they live in. It made them aware of their social value, inspired to play an active role in social life and motivated them to take action.

Taking part in workshops helped them to develop their linguistic and communication skills, improve their ability to work in a group, to understand and respect each other, easily build connections and a sense of unity, taught them to recognize different opinions and accept differences.

Not only the youth I worked with benefited from those activities, but I learned a lot too. I improved my working methods and planning and project management. While working in a completely new environment, I have a clearer vision and better understanding of different working styles and culture, as well as how to better respond to the needs of society. Working directly with highly qualified NGO workers with a great experience contributed to the exchange of ideas and solutions for improvement, which I am happy to implement in my volunteering at my host NGO as well as back home. The international dimension of my work positively influenced the development of my personal and professional competences, such as the ability to deal with a completely new environment in unknown situations. I have learned a lot from every single person I met here. I truly admire my experience here in Vietnam, appreciate the country and its people who are very kind and helpful.

problems and to become change makers.

I am very happy that I can be a part of this beautiful experience and I believe that every single effort and even the smallest improvement will multiply in the future and is a small step for a great change.



At the moment, I am developing a workshop which aims to equip youth on project management. I see that many of them have a lot of ideas but do not know exactly how to structure it and turn into action. I believe that it will boost their creativity and motivate them to create wonderful social initiatives that will add value to the society and build stronger ties with the community. During the workshop, we will work together to better understand the concept of social entrepreneurship and to search for solutions, discover approaches and get inspired to find new ways to address social problems around us in the Vietnamese local community. Many of the young people are very creative and need guidance to chart out their ideas and become social entrepreneurs in many different ways. The workshop has been designed for everyone who is willing to approach social entrepreneurship for the first time, as well as for those who already have some experience. We truly believe that taking that step will encourage youth to tackle social



## Inclusion market in Vienna

Grenzenlos-ICYE Austria participated in the first indoor inclusion market on 13th September 2019 in Vienna, Austria. The inclusion market is a fair for people with disabilities to learn opportunities for mobility, employment, assistance, leisure time activities and much more. More than 95 institutions and companies attended the fair. In a peer-to-peer approach, Grenzenlos' volunteer Esin, who is currently participating in a long-term inclusion-volunteering project in Vienna, informed interested visitors about the ICYE and European Solidarity Corps programme. Volunteer coordinators answered questions about the administrative procedures of the programmes. Events such as this are important to reach out to the target group and make volunteering possible for everyone!



This year Grenzenlos is also finalizing a 3-year inclusion pilot project in cooperation with the Austrian network "WeltWegWeiser", a project funded by the ADA - Austrian Development Agency. The goal of the project is to send Austrian volunteers with disabilities or chronic diseases to Latin America, Africa or Asia for 6 - 12 months.

Visit the inclusion page and learn more about Grenzenlos' inclusion-volunteering programme: <https://www.volunteering.at/inklusion/>

## Youth Work Can Unite: International Volunteering to Enhance Solidarity and Fight Nationalism



The new Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project "Youth Work Can Unite: International Volunteering to Enhance Solidarity and Fight Nationalism", centrally coordinated by the ICYE International Office, has been approved by the European Commission. The project aims to engage, connect and empower young people, international volunteering and civil society organisations in an anti-racism movement, making an urgent call to action: to challenge populist narratives in which asylum seekers and refugees are a danger to society and work toward diverse, inclusive societies.

The activities of the project comprise a taskforce preparation meeting in January 2020 in Milan, Italy, an international anti-racism training in Porto Alegre, Brazil, followed by volunteering placements for 12 young people in in Africa, Europe and Latin America. The volunteers of the project will plan and implement campaigns challenging racism and supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Austria, Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, Iceland, Italy, Kenya, Nigeria, Poland, Slovakia, South Africa and the United Kingdom.

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



## ICYE's 70th Anniversary Celebrations

To celebrate our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, ICYE planned a series of events in 2019. One of the key events was the short story writing competition "Tell a Life-Changing ICYE Tale", for which we are pleased to announce and congratulate the winners:

**First award category** (open to ICYE alumni)

*Valeria Olaya Valdiviezo* for [Chain Reaction](#), who will attend ICYE's 70th anniversary celebrations at its General Assembly in Vietnam in November 2019.

First runner up: *Sandra Smithers Garciaruiz* for [Welcome home, útlendingur](#) (foreigner)

Second runner up: *Alexandra Luise Sundberg* for [Volunteers for a Year and Friends for a Lifetime](#)



**Second award category** (open to the public)

*Kieu Minh Huyen* for her story [No Language Border Exists](#), who wins a volunteering experience in Colombia.

First runner up: *Thanh Duong* for [Thousands Of Miles Far Away – Thousands Of Ways To Be Closer](#)

Second runner up: *Cleylin Candelaria Pérez Ponce* for [The love I miss for giving you, another needs it.](#)



A special edition of the ICYE Federation newsletter "[Best of ICYE](#)" was published in July this year and presents 15 of the best articles by volunteers published in the ICYE Federation newsletters from its first issue in February 2003 to the very last in February 2019.

Finally, yet importantly, the celebratory year will culminate with an anniversary party on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2019, the last day of the [ICYE 31<sup>st</sup> General Assembly](#) in Hoi An, Vietnam.