

EU and Africa European Voluntary Service Project on

“Youth and Children’s Rights”



Project Documentation
September 2008 – June 2009



Education and Culture DG

‘Youth in Action’ Programme

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1. Introduction

The **EU and Africa EVS Project on Youth and Children's Rights**, supported by the EU Youth in Action Programme (Action 2 - Agreement Nr 2008-1664) was carried out from September 2008 - June 2009 by the ICYE International Office in cooperation with ICYE member and partner organisations in 7 EU and 6 African countries. The young people – 7 from Africa and 12 from Europe – participated for nine months in children and social projects in Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland and Sweden from EU countries and Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda from Africa.

"Volunteering is learning how to make yourself happy"

(Ruth – Ghana to Sweden).

The objective of this EU and Africa reciprocal EVS project was to foster awareness and protection of Children Rights by involving young volunteers from different African and European countries in projects dealing with youth and children at risk as well as in projects dealing with young people of disadvantaged background / with less opportunities, such as SOS Children villages, child care centres, after school activities, specialized agencies dealing with children rights and youth volunteering organisations. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child this project furthermore aimed at informing children and young people from Europe and Africa about their rights and society about its obligations in respecting and protecting the rights of children and youth. One special characteristic of this challenging European Voluntary Service (EVS) project was the reciprocal exchange and mutual help on a trans-continental level, between EU-member States and African countries. Thanks to this project, which included joint preparatory training and final evaluation meetings, EVS volunteers from EU and African countries had the opportunity to travel to each other's countries - and to meet on the way. This reciprocal encounter offered volunteers as well as local communities great opportunities for a better understanding and the inside-outside view of one's culture.

This report aims at recognizing and making visible the results of this theme-related EVS project in European and African countries, highlighting its intercultural non-formal learning impact. It mainly features testimonies and reports by the volunteers written while they were working and living in the different countries but also contains information on the programme of the volunteer training meetings and information concerning the theme Children Rights.

The project started with a pre-departure training (chapter 3) held in Berlin with all the volunteers right before leaving to their host countries. This training prepared volunteers for the experience of living in a European/African country, the main focus being the preparation for the cultural differences and adaptation process the volunteers were about to undergo. Concluding the project, volunteers and trainers met again in June 2009 in Berlin to have a Final Evaluation meeting (Chapter 5). During this meeting participants and organizers reflected on the outcome of the different projects, exchanged and shared ideas and experiences and went a step further in understanding and appreciating cultural differences.

We would like to thank the EC for the support granted, as well as the volunteers and partner organisations for their valuable contributions to the success of this challenging but fruitful EVS project.

ICYE International Office

2. Youth and Children's Rights

"The miracle of a kid who grows up as a free and independent kid; a reality that doesn't know borders or racial discrimination" (Celeste), Italy to Kenya)

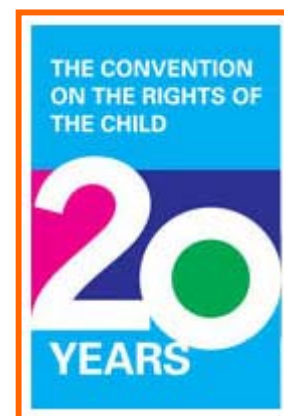


At a rough estimate, there are 2,2 billion children in the world today. Almost 2 billion of these children live in developing countries and 200 million children live in industrialised countries. 600 million of the entire world population are under the age of 5. Only 85 % of the total number of children of the age of primary school attends primary school. In the industrialized countries the percentage is 96. In the African countries about 50 % of the population lives under the international line of poverty which is US\$ 1,25 per day.

Many initiatives are launched and desperately needed to improve and optimise the situation of the children all over the world.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

In 1989, the United Nations adopted the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, which has been ratified by all the countries except the United States of America and Somalia. This convention is a landmark in the history of the rights of the children since it is the first compulsory international instrument adopted in this field.



The CRC consists of 41 articles on children's rights. You can find the entire convention on www.unicef.org/crc

Children's rights are part of the EU's overall human rights policy

The EU has developed numerous policy instruments for the promotion and protection of children's rights in its external relations. Most recent policy documents include: Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2006), EU Guidelines on the Rights of the Child (2007), EU Guidelines on Children in Armed Conflicts, Communication "A Special Place for Children in EU External Action" (2008), and Council Conclusions (2008). (all documents can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/child/index_en.htm

Extract of *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*

Article 1

Definition of child as "every human being below the age of eighteen years", unless the national law considers majority attained at an earlier age.

Article 2

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present

Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status. [...]

Article 6

1. S.Ps. recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.

2. S.Ps. shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

Article 8

1. S.Ps. undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference. [...]

Article 12

1. S.Ps. shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. [...]

Article 14

1. S.Ps. shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. [...]

Article 24

S.Ps. recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or

her right of access to such health care services. [...]

Article 28

1. S.Ps. recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all; [...]

Article 31

1. S.Ps. recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. [...]

Article 32

1. S.Ps. recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. [...]

Article 33

S.Ps. shall take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in

the relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances.

Article 34

S.Ps. undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. [...]

Article 38

1. S.Ps. undertake to respect and to ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child. [...]

Article 40

1. S.Ps. recognize the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others and which takes into account the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's reintegration and the child's assuming a constructive role in society. [...]

(i) To be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law;

As the situation of children needs particular attention, institutions, NGO'S and political organisations have to work together in actively promoting children rights and trying to improve the situation of children worldwide.

Within this context the ICYE EU-Africa EVS project aimed at contributing to the above-mentioned efforts by enabling young people from EU countries to live and work in African countries and vice versa, engaging them in the work of local organisations committed to the promotion and protection of children rights in a wider sense. Together with the local staff, the volunteers worked with orphans, street children, delinquent youth, people with disabilities, migrant women, legal assistance agencies etc. This experience sensitised them regarding global issues such as poverty, exploitation, injustice and showed them different approaches of working with children and youth. Living in such a different environment has definitely broadened the volunteers' horizon, changed their perception regarding the situation of children and the realities they face in different societies, and has motivated them to stand up for children rights in their own societies and worldwide.

The volunteer trainings which were offered alongside the project work focused on discussing the situation of children in the participating European and African countries as well as the different priorities and approaches taken in order to achieve the respect of children and youth rights in our societies. These joint meetings also enabled the volunteers to share their experiences with the other volunteers and to learn about the situation of different groups of young people in the participating EU and African countries as well as about the work of the different host organisations. You will find excerpts of the volunteers' notes and reports about their project work in chapter 4 of this documentation.



Volunteers meeting each other for the first time at the Pre Departure meeting in Berlin. September 2008

3. Pre-Departure Meeting



The EVS Project started with a pre-departure training in Berlin, on September 29th – 2nd October 2008. In total 19 volunteers from Europe and Africa started their EVS journey in Berlin.

The meeting was an opportunity to

discuss and share motivations, hopes and expectations between the volunteers. Furthermore the volunteers were informed about the EVS programme itself, e.g. Youth in Action programmes, support structure, logistics. As preparation to living in a “new”, unknown country and culture the main focus was on intercultural learning, cultural adaptation as well as problem solving methods. The interactive methods used during this training dealt with identity, cultural diversity, cultural adaptation process, communication, conflict resolution and the concept of volunteering. A very important purpose of the meeting was also to work on the theme of the project: *Youth and Children's Rights*. The main objective was for the volunteers to learn more about the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* and use that as a common ground. To enable an on-going contact among the volunteers during their EVS, an E-group mailing list was established. This enhanced regular inputs through emails, excerpts of which are contained in this documentation.

Highlights of the Training

Expectation of my EVS – hopes and fears:

The volunteers expressed their thoughts, hopes, fears and expectation concerning their EVS and the stay abroad.

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).

Host project / Work: Hope to be able to contribute in a positive and sustainable way to the project so that its people appreciate the presence of international volunteers, and to use this experience to benefit for 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. **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.

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 homesick and not being understood when coming home.

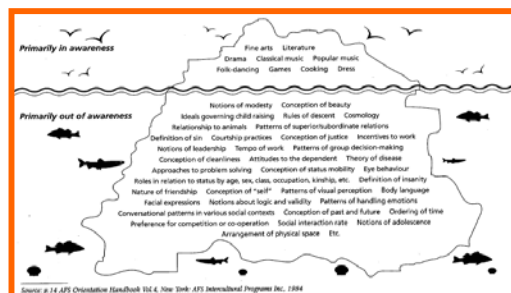


Intercultural Learning

Values:

The goal of this session was 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” different values than our own was highlighted. As a reference to the different aspects and expressions of culture in different layers of our awareness, 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 are of great support. Therefore 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. Should volunteers not be able to solve a problem on their own, they can count on a support structure in ICYE, which means that host and sending organisation as well as the international office as coordinator work closely together to support the volunteer in any problematic moment/situation during the EVS.

Session on Youth and Children's Rights

As a start-off for a plenary discussion, the team had prepared statements on selected articles from UN *Convention of the Rights of the Child*, including the following:

The child has the right to education. The State shall make primary education compulsory and available and free to all. School discipline shall be administered in a manner consistent with the child's dignity. Education should be directed towards the development of the child's personality, talents and abilities, towards the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, towards the development of a responsible life in a free society in the spirit of peace, friendship, understanding, tolerance and equality, and towards the development of respect for the natural environment.

The right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion shall be respected. The child has the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

The child shall be protected from economic exploitation and from performing work that is hazardous to his/her life and development. The child shall be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, the use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices, in pornographic performances and materials.

The State shall take all feasible measures to protect and care for children affected by armed conflict.

The child has the right to express freely views on all matters affecting him/her, and the child's views should be given due weight. The child has the right to freedom of expression.

Following the presentation of these statements participants split in mixed EU/Africa discussion groups, which had the task to make a priority ranking of the statements. The following plenary presentation and discussion showed that priorities of participants from African countries were quite different from the ones from Europe. The European priorities laid more in the field of education, freedom of expression etc., whereas the African participants, given the partly desperate situation of children in their countries, ranked issues like protection of the child from armed conflicts and protection against abuse and economical exploitation of children as the highest priorities, for rights to be enforced in their countries.

4. EVS – an experience for life!

In this chapter the different experiences of the participating volunteers have been documented. Most of the inputs are taken from questionnaires, emails or statements (at the trainings) from the volunteers. They reflect the variety of view points, encounters and personal feelings of individual participants in this heterogeneous group. At the same time the volunteers testimonies have something very important and uniting in common: All volunteers experienced a new environment and culture and their different reactions to it - sometimes feeling like “a fish without water”, sometimes full of empathy, sometimes fully integrated in the host community or sometimes feeling like going home. This is well described in the sentence by Kadri Miller: “Sometimes I felt I cannot stay there for another second, but other times I wished I never had to leave”

First Impressions

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

Margareth, Kenyan Volunteer in Austria

When I boarded a plane to Vienna, I had this blank picture in my head about my life in Austria. No image, no idea, no nothing. When I got to Vienna, the airline had lost my bags and we were two hours delayed. This was just the perfect start, I thought to myself. When I stepped out I was happy to meet Barbara, from Grenzenlos who took me to the office where we had hot coffee together. It was thereafter that my mentor came to pick me up and took me to the project. I was excited to meet the children, my new colleagues as well as some parents on my very 1st day!! I played a little with the children and thereafter my mentor took me to my new flat. I was to live with an Austrian family.

When we got there, there was nobody home. So we went to a coffee house and had a great chat. Thereafter we went back to the house and still there was no body. The weather was crazily cold. I could barely feel my fingers and toes and was having jetlag. My mentor then had to leave and I let myself in the house. This I found strange because where I come from, if a visitor is coming, especially from far way, there will be someone waiting to meet them and even pick them up from wherever they are. This was truly a cultural difference. I thereafter sat down for at least two hours before someone could finally come. It was my host father, who was amazingly nice.

Celeste, Italian Volunteer in Kenya

On second October, an experience which has marked my life, began. I took, with another volunteer, a plane to Nairobi (Kenya) to work in one of the slums which cover almost the whole territory of this big city. [...] The first day I went there I thought that I couldn't do it, that it was too much for me and I was so upset looking at all the poverty which was surrounding me that I cried. This was a good sign because at least something inside had started to move.



Kadri, Estonian volunteer in Uganda:

During the first weeks I felt of course like a stranger, but I started to learn the language at once and tried to adapt the culture, so I had no major problems.

Intercultural encounters and adaptation process

"In the last week I saw the result; in the end life is very similar in all locations, only details vary" (Eeva Maria, Finish volunteer in Mozambique Sweden).

This section reflects the different stages of the volunteers cultural adaptation process. One of the most typical characteristics (even though there are many others as there are individual approaches and contexts) is: The first stage is the "honeymoon phase" - an enthusiastic first encounter with all new things and experiences. Everything is exciting, new and interesting. This stage is often followed by the "disillusionment phase" in which the person is still not part of the whole environment, feels like an outsider, 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 towards cultural differences – positively appreciating them.

Kadri, Estonian volunteers in Uganda

I was somehow lucky that during the first 4 months I had plenty of time to learn the language and the culture, because I really needed that and that way I did not have major integration nor communication problems [...] I think the first half of my voluntary service was somehow the unhappiest and the second the happiest time of my life. Although, all in all everything was even much better than I expected.

People in Uganda always tell what they think about you. And you can be sure that they always think and a lot. You have to learn to accept yourself as you are and bear all kinds of comments about you appearance, habits and everything else [...]

For a shy person, it is also quite challenging to bear with all the attention a white person gets in Uganda. Everyone wants to greet you, speak to you, get your attention. E v e r y o n e notices you. Sometimes it is somehow sad. Everyone notices, but nobody understands and you are lonely anyhow. As the time went by, I started to feel more like Ugandan myself too and it got better, I didn't even need any white people around me.



Even more, I did not want to, because I was not lonely, I had a country full of brothers and sisters, they are just different from the ones in Europe. Of course, there are better and worse days.

Sometimes I felt I cannot stay there for another second, but some other time I wished I never had to leave. It is definitely easier to bear those worse times if you have work to do, that keeps the mind away from the thoughts about home and everything.



The life in Uganda is actually very funny and without much stress. You can see unbelievable things while walking down the street. Someone is carrying alone a bed for at least 4 people, a motorcycle is carried by another motorcycle, children are playing with the weirdest things and that all becomes normal as you get to know the place. Then you can really start to enjoy the real African culture and that is the reason to go.

Felicity, British volunteer in South Africa

Transport System: The best way to deal with the transport system in Cape Town is to get as much information before you start as possible. The trains do not run past about 19:30, so it makes transport in the evenings a little difficult, plus they do not announce stations or have details of route in train so you should have a clue how many stations you need. It is not very expensive and people are usually very friendly and helpful in getting you on the right bus or taxi or train to where you want to be.



Just look on it as an adventure and it won't be too bad

Driving: I cycled a lot in Cape Town, it was the best investment I made, but just a warning that South Africans have to be some of the worst drivers in the world! And are not averse to drunk driving!

Food: Lots of delicious food, you should try Cape Malay (curry), Seafood down at Kalk Bay, Pap, Boerwors, the list goes on. Expect your diet to be a little less healthy, well if you are used to plentiful vegetables, the South Africans like fast food, but there are plenty of things to try and experience.

People: South Africans are some of the most friendly people in the world. Always interested to know who you are and

where you are from, and if you are from the UK expect lots of questions about football teams. The men can feel like they are being a bit macho, as a girl you have lots of whistles and comments in the street, but you learn it is just their way, they do not mean anything by it. *Safety:* South Africa does have a high crime rate, but I have not felt threatened here. Mostly it is about being sensible and observant. Try not to look like a rich lost foreigner and try not to be out and about alone in the dark or suspect areas and you'll be fine. South Africa's reputation is worse than the reality.

Sarah, Ugandan volunteer in Finland

About the Finnish culture and Environment, I would say it is interesting and there's something to learn about it every day, it was awesome to experience all the four seasons since we don't have them in Africa. The winter was beautiful and for the first time I saw snow and I had a white Christmas wow.... Summer time was also amazing when the sun set late that I hardly went to sleep.

I didn't really experience a big shock about the Finnish culture because I knew it had to be different since I didn't have any expectations about it. I had to embrace and I have to say I loved it. I loved their Sauna and for sure I will miss it.



Margaret, Kenyan volunteer in Austria:

I was to live with an Austrian family. When we got there, there was nobody home. So we went to a coffee house and had a great chat. Thereafter we went back to the house and still there was no body. The weather was crazily cold. I could barely feel my fingers and toes and was having jetlag. My mentor then had to leave and I let myself in the house. This I found strange because where I come from, if a visitor is coming, especially from far away, there will be someone waiting to meet them and even pick them up from wherever they are. This was truly a cultural difference. [...] Within the 1st week of my

being in Austria, I went to the village to visit my friend's family. It was there that I celebrated Christmas. I must say that it was the best Christmas I had in so many years. She has such a wonderful and friendly family. Neighbors came to visit us and brought me presents. It was here that I saw a similarity to my country. People were so warm and always had a minute or two or even two hours to spare for a chat. I was even sick and the doctor in the village treated me for free (even though I insisted that I had insurance, he said that was his present to me for Christmas).

And he insisted that I go back in the next few days for a check up. These great 1st experiences gave me a great feeling about Austria. [...] Learning the language also helped me to understand the norms of the society and so adjusting was a bit smoother. At the beginning I could just look in and try to absorb as much as possible and see which aspects of the different culture were acceptable to me and which were not.

During winter was the most difficult time for me because I slept a lot I even thought I was sick. [...] I

like how the transport system is quite effective. Everyone keeps time and everything is well planned when it comes to Austria. I love this aspect. Austrians are so very patriotic and love their mountains. They are very proud of their local products and will always write “made in Austria” on every small thing that they produce. Not to mention their language.

Austrians are always speaking German and are not so open to people who do not speak it...

Tolupe, Nigerian volunteer in Belgium

I was used to eating warm meals but when I arrived here in Belgium, I realised I had to get use to the fact that warm meal is only taken once a day and had to eat bread most of the time. I also had to get used to the idea of not eating spicy food.



The weather was unbearable because it was very cold especially in the night. I always had to use three blankets to get warm and I was not allowed to put on the heater. It was the first time that I ever experienced the snow.

Friends often give kisses on the cheek and it took a while for me to get use to that and it was not the habit here to chat with your neighbours because they were often in their homes which for me was strange.

It was common here to find youths moving in with their boyfriend/girlfriend but in Nigeria it was a belief that youths live with their parents until they were married. I found it shocking that lovers could freely express their feelings to each other in the public.

The transportation system here was very different from my country. Here you had to know the number of the bus in the direction in which you were going but in Nigeria the bus conductors called out direction for you in order to know which one to board.

Eeva Maria, Finish volunteer in Mozambique:

The past eight months have been very interesting. At the moment I feel at home in Mozambique and at the same time I have a great desire to return to my homeland. I have learned the language (the Portuguese) and I also learned a good bit of a local dialect. I got good friends and learned to understand the Mozambican way, that is more or

less depending on the day. The Mozambican people seems excellent and I enjoyed living with them. [...] I feel that I adapted quickly. After the first month I felt no great difficulties with customs or with the language. In the last week I saw the result; in the end life is very similar in all locations, only details vary.

Celeste, Italian volunteer in Kenya

To me this experience was also great because I have learned not to give too much importance to material things. One time someone stole my phone in the slum and after 2-3 months my mp3 was stolen too by a person who I knew very well. If it had happened in my country I think that I would have been very annoyed but, at the end of the day, I thought: Ok, come on, it's just a phone. In a place

like Nairobi I learnt that what you have doesn't make the difference on who you are and that, even if you lose something, you have still a lot of things to be glad for. The kids played always with a ball made of papers, jumping without shoes on a muddy ground but I never saw them crying for any of these reasons.

Bongani, South African volunteer in Germany

Well in this country for me it is completely different from where I come from, as here there is too much going on and it keeps life going and enjoyable. When I arrived here in Stuttgart there was an event called Folks Fest where people go and drink liters of Bier, play games, eat German traditional food which is very interesting. And in Christmas too there is two to three weeks that they make a special wine for Christmas (it's really nice I like it) and last month there was a Frühlings Fest. So I mean it really gives a good feeling and it



makes you feel that you are in a different country and with different people at the same time. On the other side I used to get invitations from friends to go and eat Stuttgart traditional food which is really great to me. So what I mean is all the experiences I had since I arrive here really made my life. I was once in a regional Group meeting in Tübingen and we went to a party called break down the house where people break whatever is in front of them, it was nice but shocking at the same time, as for me it was a new thing to see. In my country, it is really not like this and the way, I see it we still have a long journey to travel to get there.



Maarit, Finish volunteer in Kenya:

My host family was very helpful in this matter (integration), even too much, as they took me around to see about every member of the extended family who's names I could never remember.

Karin, Swedish volunteer in South Africa:

I think that when it comes to integration it's very much up to you to get to know people and be as open as possible but of course it helps living with a family.

Dario, Italian volunteer in Mozambique:

I really like Mozambique and the Mozambique people! [...] The cultural difference was not a problem. I go back to Italy with a girlfriend - she's Mozambican!!!

Dorota, Finish Volunteer in Ghana:

Next big thing was general reaction to me as a European. I knew I could forget about getting "lost" in the crowd, but again the extent to which my

presence caused disturbance was a surprise. No matter the age, people would shout after me "Obruni (white person) where are you going?" It is

a normal question in twi, people always tell each other where they're heading to. Most of the times these greetings were very nice, but sometimes they seemed aggressive and patronising. In these situations I chose not to answer, even though not greeting back is considered bad manners. As children usually see white tourists, most often they would shout: give me pen, give me money! This didn't happen often though and any parent or adult would normally discipline them.

My ability to speak basic twi was a cause of laughter (usual reaction in social situations), but

would bring prices down from "obruni price" to more or less normal one. Many Ghanaians were very surprised that somebody from outside spoke their language and usually complemented my efforts with "wa ye adee" (you have done well). Some treated it as a challenge and kept asking more and more difficult questions to "catch me" not understanding, which again resulted in outbursts of laughter.

New home in a new country

As the participants of this programme are all volunteers they 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:

Sarah, Ugandan Volunteer in Finland:

I lived in the project in an apartment with another volunteer from Germany and we both had a great time living together.

Bongani, South African volunteer in Germany:

Coming to the living situation I lived with another volunteer and she is coming from Ukraine. I was really happy that there is someone that I will be living with in the same house. Although there is a

neighbour who is now a best friend of mine for his positive attitude and for that he is very helpful and kind.

Dorota, Polish Volunteer in Ghana:

Volunteers living in Edwenase are usually living in the project as are all the staff. There are two rooms; one on each side of the compound (for girls and boys). With the big number of volunteers though, myself and another one were living in teachers quarters. Our room was freshly painted and had electricity (though power cuts very often, especially during rainy season). I had no running water though, so I had to be brought from the centre. Initially one of the teachers was cooking food for me and the other volunteer, but this proved to be not having a good impact on our relations with students who saw me being served by one of the staff and eating food better than them. Starting from January, since there were no kitchen facilities to use, I was buying my own food on the street. It was a good way to get to know people living around, use more twi; local traders are great traders.

Good thing about living where I did was it being outside of student's area. It made it easier to



maintain healthy boundaries, get perspective on all, sometimes very difficult things, happening in the centre. On the other hand I was living surrounded by teachers and other staff, so I was always in the same company. Having no glass windows meant that even sitting in my room I was in the middle of everything that was happening in the quarters. On the other hand being around so

many people-young and old- made it easier to be

away from home.

Margaret, Kenyan volunteer in Austria:

Due to some issues I am now not living with my family anymore but in a volunteer flat. I still have contact with my former host mother. I like it at this flat because we share ideas about our work and we have so much in common... We still get to learn

other cultures other than Austrian😊 It is always great at the end of the day to come home and have a conversation with one of the other volunteers. This helps to have a feeling of not being alone with the EVS experience.

Eeva Maria, Finish volunteer in Mozambique:

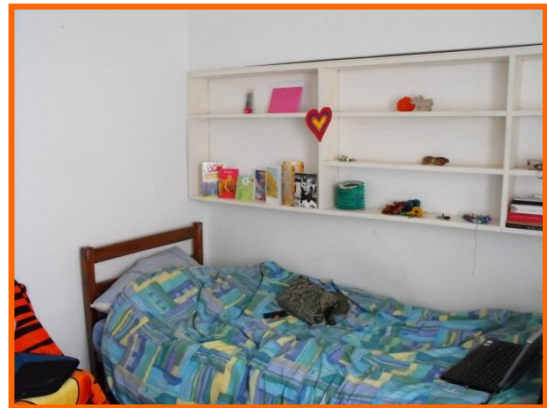
I live with a family of lower middle class out of town, like all volunteers in ICYE Mozambique. The family consists of parents and two daughters, one of 13 years, another 3 years. According to public opinion the neighbourhoods where the volunteers live, are considered quite dangerous. Returning home after 9 pm is not recommended, although many volunteers do not pay much attention to the recommendation. The trip to downtown takes 45

minutes by public transport. This route is quite difficult to take part in the nightlife in Maputo, but elsewhere the volunteers learn to dominate public transport perfectly. With the transport I was very lucky because my house is very well connected which is not the status of all volunteers. At home I have my own room with a big bed.

Felicity, British volunteer in South Africa:

I was placed with a host family, the Pause's. At first I was very apprehensive about having to share with a family for 9 months, and due to some technical error I was not able to communicate with them prior to arrival.. First impression were that the home and family were very different to what I was used to at home, and well this has not changed. However that does not mean it has been the difficult situation I imagined it could be. The family are very welcoming and very helpful. I was given my own room, and that was my space for the duration of the 9 months which was really nice.

There was another international volunteer living in the house too, which had its advantage but generally I think the family would have helped me survive anyway. Other family members lives at home as well and quite often you can expect 10 people in the house. You also have to adapt to a different diet, rice and potatoes with the same meal, and a lot of curry and a lot of meat, but Mrs Pause also loves to try and cook your favourites and takes note of what you like and don't like. I have really enjoyed living with the family, as with all families they can be a bit much at times, but they are also very friendly and very caring.



Kadri, Estonian volunteer in Uganda:

[...]The best thing was that my host family was living 4 km from the project, so I could walk 8 km every day to the work and back and I really enjoyed the journey in the jungle.



Maarit, Finish volunteer in Kenya

After the first five months I was living with some friend for a couple of months. Not because I didn't like my host family, but because I felt I was more in control of my own life when I could make my decisions more independently. My host family took me well as a part of their family.

Tolupe, Nigerian volunteer in Belgium:

I lived first in Schelle, a village in Antwerp for the first five months a retired couple. They were nice but very protective - always looking out for me. I stayed a lot in the city with my friends because it was too quiet there. We often discussed about the difference in culture of the two countries – Nigeria and Belgium. I had to leave because my host mother needed an operation and she needed to be away for a while. I stayed temporarily in Berchem with a single working class lady who was quite understanding because he had been a volunteer to Ghana and she actually knew what it is to be a volunteer. I had to cook my own food because my host was a busy lady and I liked it there. The other place I lived was in Merksem with a young couple who had three children ages 3 (twins) and 1. They were understanding and fun to be with.

All my host families were nice and caring, I was treated as part of the family and we sometimes went out together to gatherings or just to have fun, we exchanged cultural ideas and beliefs. I had my own room in all my host families and in Schelle, I had my own separate bathroom.



Work and activities in the project

“Education is the weapon of peace and peace is the condition of good education” (Celeste, Italy to Kenya)

The volunteers participated in local projects that tackled the issue of Children’s Rights in one or another way and contributed to the life at the local host communities. The variety of organisations, as well as of the tasks and activities of the volunteers are reflected in the below testimonies and reports:

Kadri, Estonian volunteer in Uganda:

[...] sent me to an orphanage with 60 children, where no volunteer had been before. That was the best thing that could happen to me. Now I had a really nice host family, I would say close to perfection, and a place where I could work every day from morning till evening if I wanted to. [...] From the first day I felt I am at the right place and that feeling pretty much lasted until I had to leave Uganda.

Since I was the first volunteer at the place, in the beginning none even really understood what that means. But as the time went by, we all got to understand each other very well. Children got used to me and after 2 weeks we were already like a family with both all the problems and joy. I had plenty of work to do, I was helping children with household work, played and discussed the world with them and somehow acted like their mother. My goal was to get them other volunteers after me, because I know that place really needs one.



A typical day started with walking to the project through the village and the fantastic jungle forest. Then I had to do some work on my own or play with the sick children who did not go to school, as the other ones were at school. Around 1 pm the younger ones came back, then we pumped and brought water, cooked, ate and played, sat and had our conversations, played drum using jerry cans etc. Around 4 pm the rest of the children came and we did the same thing. Whenever we had to, we did some household work washed clothes or mopped the floors, and when we

exactly did not have to, we sang, danced and did whatever we liked. Since I had to be back home before dark which is by 7 pm, I usually left the orphanage around 5 or 6 to get home on time. In the evening I had tea with my family and I got to bed very early, because I always got up also early. Sometimes I had to go later to work, because I had to wash my own clothes, go to the internet cafe or do anything else that I had to.

Sarah, Ugandan volunteer in Finland:

Lehtimaen Opisto / Lehtimäki Folk High School for mentally handicapped youngsters and adults. The school offers 80 places for students and there are more than 100 different short term courses for disabled youngsters and adults and their families. The school also offers training in rehabilitation like riding and physical therapy.

I worked at Lehtimaen Opisto, a folk boarding school for the special disabled students, it was nice to work with them and see their daily life.

I always went to help at the school with the students:

I helped in preparing breakfast, cleaning them up and their rooms, attended music lessons with them and we always sang together during the concerts the school would hold.

I had the opportunity to take part in horse-riding lessons every Friday and it was great. I also took part in cooking and baking lessons which was a way of getting to learn the finish culture.



Felicity, British volunteer in South Africa

Volunteer Centre: The **Volunteer Centre**, in cooperation with “Research Aimed at the Prevention of Child abuse and Neglect” (R.A.P.C.A.N) is committed to developing child abuse prevention strategies to combat the patterns of abuse which affect the lives of children and adults everywhere. This is done through training adults, informing children, materials development, dissemination and advocacy.

I worked for a children’s rights organisation called RAPCAN, based in Diep River in Cape Town. The organisation is well established and works locally, nationally and internationally. My programme was 9 months long and so I was placed with the research and advocacy department. The organisation is still quite small, about 20 full time staff members, although half of these are not based in the office. The office itself is in a good location, not much



in terms of shops and things to look at or be able to get lunch but it is near to a train line and has a balcony for those nice summer days.

It was very much a desk job, although I did attend some community workshops and seminars. I enjoyed the job, because I enjoy to research and also was able to use my previous teaching experience to help try and write a curriculum to be piloted in 9 schools throughout South Africa. For me I felt like I had an impact and was well utilised by the company, I was rarely wanting for something to do, and my supervisor made sure I got to experience other areas of the organisation as well. There are opportunities to get out into the local communities more and the organisation are very good at listening to what you would like to do and working with your skill set.

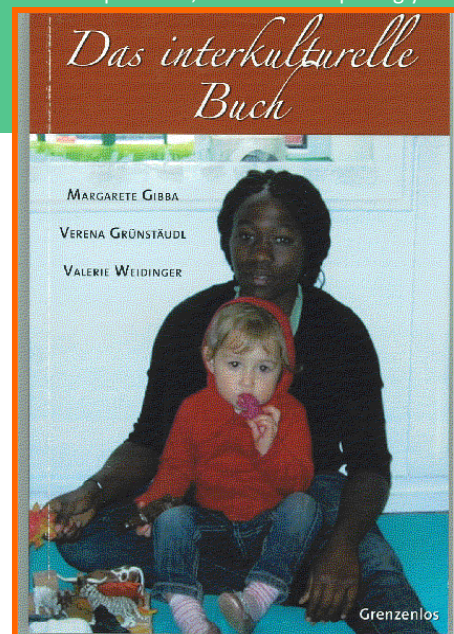
Margaret, Kenyan volunteer in Austria:

Kindergruppe Farblecks: Kindergruppe Farblecks Intercultural learning for small children. Our non profit organisation is providing after school day care for children from 2 to 6 years old. Our privately organised association was founded as a social project, out of the desperate need for qualified after school care. The after school care facilities provided by public service did not meet the pedagogic ideals and emotional expectations we try to achieve for the care of our children. Furthermore there is no sufficient quantity of available day care places. For that reason an ambitious group of parents decided to start our group. Most of the parents have an intensive experience with longstanding children's groups in Vienna, based on free learning, and we see our organisation as the logic consequence and continuation of this outstanding way of care giving for small children. EVS was an essential part of the philosophy of the children's groups the children visited before and we are familiar with working with volunteers from EVS. Our philosophy is to support and accept each child as an individual within a community of children having equal rights. Each child should be encouraged to develop self-consciousness and self-confidence in order to take independent decisions while showing consideration for the other children in the group.

Grenzenlos presented the recently published "Das Interkulturelle Buch" (The Intercultural Book). The back cover says: "Austrian Volunteers abroad get engaged and provide support in projects fostering education, social integration and environmental protection, without any qualification and mostly at their own costs. What kind of experiences do they make? Foreign exchange students and volunteers hosted in Austria, conversely, act as a mirror of our society. How are these young persons doing, who following their adventure lust came to Austria? Have they been warmly welcomed? Are they making new friends?"

Through the many individual interviews the authors searched for answers to these questions, and found surprisingly many!"

My tasks at the Kindergruppe include playing with the children, preparing meals, reading books... My roles vary from day to day as there's specific structure. There are 15 children who are aged between 2 and 6. I work from Monday to Friday. Everyday in the afternoon for the last one hour, I am left with the children and one parents. It was also at the very beginning where we had a lot of plans that with the parents and children at the weekends and we did a lot together. This has really helped me to understand the children and how to deal with them. I made connection with most parents which played a big role in adjusting into my work.



Karin Björnberg, Swedish volunteer in South Africa:

[...] I have done research about Swedish laws concerning children and written a report about this topic. I have also done research about training manuals for facilitators working with children who have been sexually exploited. Planned and facilitated workshops for at risk youths from a number of local communities on a variety of issues, including: conflict, human security, gender, xenophobia, and discrimination, as a part of a wider project run by the organisation. I wrote an evaluation report about the workshops in question including a comparative element to youth worked EU - Africa EVS on Youth and Children Rights

with in Sweden. Taken part in leisure time activities for at risk youth aimed at boosting their self-esteem and confidence. I constructed a framework for a newsletter and facilitated a newsletter group, formed of young boys from the local community, Cape flats, who have been part of a young man's group, aimed at motivating young men to take responsibility and make healthy and productive choices in life.

Tolupe, Nigerian volunteer in Belgium:

Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) Antwerp is an organisation for women development and empowerment which was established in 1919, this year made it 90 years that it was in existence. In Antwerp it is known as Intercultureel Vrouwen Centrum Antwerpen (IVCA) – Intercultural women Centre Antwerp because it is multicultural, non-religious and pluralistic and it is a centre for diversity and the work is mostly with migrant women in order to facilitate their integration process in the Belgian society and culture.



Activities of IVCA

Training: IVCA organises training-courses of Dutch, conversational classes, catering, sewing, computer lessons. **Workshops:** Workshops are given to schools, organisations, festivals etc on different topics. **Childcare:** This facility is very essential for mothers who come for various activities because they don't have to worry about getting a baby-sit for their children.

Thrift Shop: It is a second hand shop organised twice a year for fund raising and also for the women in order for them to buy at cheaper rates. **Women Library:** Women can borrow books and films from the library and return at a later date for a very small amount.

Women Afternoon: The women afternoon is a gathering for the women to come together and do activities such as cooking, making of jewellerys, paintings etc

Women Networking: IVCA also connects with other women organisations to work together in order to facilitate the cause of women in the Society and such organisations are: the Philippines, the Jewish's, the Congolese etc.

Job Opportunities: IVCA help the women to search for jobs and also to give advice on what to expect at their interviews and the type of job that is suitable for them. **Girls in the City:** Girls in the city is a club for young women between the ages of 18 and 30. Different activities are organised for them such as Cooking workshops, Drama, excursions and training courses.

My Work in IVCA:

I worked with other volunteers in the project "Girls in the City" the club for young women.

The need for the club arose from the fact that most of the activities in IVCA were for women and mothers and there was virtually none for girls. I came to join IVCA when the project was about to begin. The project was for a year and the funding came from the diversity department of the City of Antwerp.

As part of my work in IVCA, I promoted Girls in the City among the English Speaking African Organisations in Antwerp and other organisations such as the Red Cross – Refugee camp, Russian Organisation, Payoke – Anti Trafficking organisation, PINA – the diversity Centre for Antwerp. I was a leader in Girls in the City, I promoted the activities of the group through the use of the internet sending mails to the girls, made flyers for the events, called to the girls as a reminder. We often had team meetings to discuss how to organize and prepare for activities. The girls who came for the activities were diverse in culture and from countries like Belgium, Ukraine, Nepal, China, Somalia, Angola, Congo, Nigeria, Brazil, Hungary, Moldova etc. All of them had their stories. All activities organised were informal, relaxing and educative. The goal of the project was to facilitate the integration process of the girls and help them find their place in Belgium as first generation migrants.

Activities of "Girls in the City"

Cooking Workshops: This workshop brought the girls together as they had fun and were able to showcase the culture and took charge of the evening and each one took turn to prepare her native cuisine.

We've had cuisines from Angola, Brazil, Nigeria, Russia, Belgium, Congo, Nepal etc.

Training Courses: These were conducted in English and experts were invited to give a talk on different topics as related to the girls. The manual we used was from the World YWCA and among the topics were: Violence against Women, HIV and AIDS, Sexual and Reproductive System, Project Management, Self Esteem and Body Image etc **Drama and Dancing:** This was a form of body expression, dancing and drama. It brought about closeness and interaction among the girls. The theme of the drama performance was from the girls themselves.

Excursions: This helped with the girls orientation of some of the cities in Belgium. We organised a Fashion Walk in Antwerp – We went to the Fashion Museum and also visited the cheap clothing shops in Antwerp. The second

excursion was in Brussels the Capital City and we visited the European parliament, the Justice Palace, the African Community, etc while the third one was the Rainbow (Gay) Tour - we cooperated with an Holiby organisation who wanted to break stereotypes about Gays, Lesbians and Transsexuals among migrants and together we organised the tour for the girls. The tour was about the history of Gays in Antwerp and the kind of life they lived and how they protected their interest. We visited gay cafés, arena and even saw the house of Gay couple, etc. Movie Show: A Movie show about the Jewish Community titled "Left Luggage" was organized in IVCA for the girls and they learnt a lot about the Jewish tradition because a guest who was invited from a Jewish organization.

Childcare: I also had the task of childcare, I took care of children who are between the ages of 6 months and 3 years. I was involved in the administration of the crèche - Organisation of meetings for babysitters, make suggestions for activities and I also gave general support.

Administration: I often stayed at the reception to receive calls, visitors, show them round the centre, sort out letters to be posted and also posted letters. I also helped in the layout of documents on the computer.



Women Afternoon: I also participated in the organization of the women afternoon by giving workshops about African Hair, putting of make-up and sometimes helped in the organization and preparation of the place to used. Generally, I participated in the sub-committee meetings where we made and took decisions to organize events and activities for IVCA, soliciting for funds or gift to be used for raffle draws, decoration, making flyers etc.

I wrote an article in the News Magazine of IVCA about Self Esteem and Body Image and also compiled all the recipes by Girls in the City.

Celeste, Italian Volunteer in Kenya:

ANGAZA Trust is a Community Based Trust working to assist street and vulnerable children, youth and the communities to develop a balanced emotion, social, spiritual and physical stamina.

On second October, an experience which has marked my life began. I took, with another volunteer, a plane to Nairobi (Kenya) to work in one of the slums which cover almost the whole territory of this big city. The slum is called Mukuru Kwa Njenga and the project I was sent to is a school situated in Mukuru and called Angaza Trust. Angaza, in Swahili, is a word which means light and this is what the people who are working there to help the community are trying to do, to give light to poor people so that their brightness comes not from gold or money but from who they are. The school I mentioned before takes something like 200 children in: from baby-class up to class 6. As understandable, they adopt a different school system (from the European one): it starts from baby-class to carry on with nursery class, pre-unit, primary school(8 years) from where they get the Kenya Certificate Primary Education(KCPE) and secondary school(4 years) from where they receive, at the end, the Kenya Certificate Secondary Education(KCSE). Some young people decide to go to university and, generally, it doesn't take more than four years unless you choose a special faculty. So, the children I was



working with were from 3 years old to 15. This experience was great, interesting and unique. The first day I went there I thought that I couldn't do it, that it was too much for me and I was so upset looking at all the poverty which was surrounding me that I cried. This was a good sign because at least something inside had started to move. I worked with those children for 9 months, teaching them Italian, English, maths but, above all, playing with them, living with their smiles. Of course, when the people talk about the happiness of those kids, I have to say that its just a dream. Its true that they always smile but its not hard to understand that their smiles are sad and their eyes are full of sorrow. But, its interesting seeing the way they react to life, the most simple way: just smiling.

Moreover, another basic aspect is that this experience made me think about the meaning of education. The teachers I was working with used to beat the children with a very big stick made of wood. This happens, of course, every time they don't listen to what the teacher is saying. I don't think that being violent (especially to children) is the solution because the history teaches us that violence produces violence and that education

must be a peaceful act, that the main role of the teachers is to make the kids think, to talk to them, to tell them that the most important thing is to use the brain and not the body. Education is the weapon of peace and peace is the condition of good education. Anyway, I'm sure that also the punishments methods will improve and that Kenya is growing so fast from different points of view.

Maarit, Finish volunteer in Kenya:

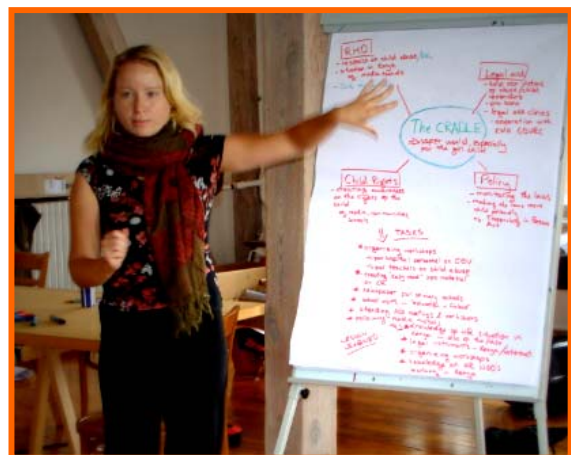
The CRADLE is a non-profit, non-governmental organization which works towards the protection and enhancement of children's rights. This is very connected to the theme youth and children rights.

I spent my volunteering period working at the Cradle – The Children's Foundation, and organisation to a large extent based on legal work – legal aid, law reform and research and child rights and especially on child sexual abuse which the organisation seeks to eradicate. The organisation is divided in four departments: 1. Legal aid (the important back bone of the organisation), 2. Child Rights and Awareness (where I was mainly based), 3. Policy and Legislative Advocacy, and 4. Research Monitoring and Documentation (referred to as RMD)

In the Child Rights and Awareness wing of the organisation we seek to enhance the general awareness of the Kenyan population about Child Rights and especially about child sexual abuse. For this the department organises for example bazaars and paralegal trainings. They also have a programme called girls SHALL which includes both primary and secondary classes of some schools in Nairobi and Suba. For the primary classes included in this programme they have something called the LetterLink boxes, which is basically a post box located in the school for the children to drop their letters in. This is meant to be a forum of confidentiality for the children to express their concerns and general issues they ponder upon, even concerning the teachers who do not have access to the letters dropped inside the boxes.

For the secondary schools there is Save Horizon clubs, in Suba and Nairobi, and in these clubs the girls are to get stronger as individuals and especially develop on leadership skills. The clubs are run by the girls themselves, the CRADLE should be there only to monitor. The CRADLE also enquires the girls every once in a while on matters that would interest the girls and then the organisation seeks to provide the girls with some information they were concerned about.

[...] A big part of the Child Rights wing's work is to organise workshops, so in my time we organised two trainings for two and three days. The other one was for the medical practitioners and the other for teachers. As a volunteers my role was to assist in



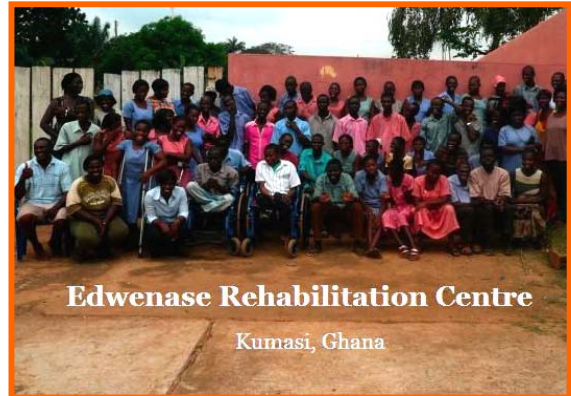
these trainings, help create the folders for teachers. As a volunteers my role was to assist in these trainings, help create the folders for the participants, type down the minutes, do small arrangements at the place of the workshop etc. [...] Otherwise at the Child rights we also created a lot of child rights awareness material such as flyers for the bazaar, 72h campaign posters and other child friendly material such as media dockets on child right issues – I did one on early marriage. For the LetterLink schools I also participated in creating the material for the magazine to be published.

[...] I feel that the CRADLE is a serious and rather professional organisation and I was happy to gain part of their knowledge on many issues.

Dorota, Polish volunteer in Ghana

The main role of the Edwenase Rehabilitation Centre is to rehabilitate the less privileged youth in the society. Therefore, the centre provides services to relieve the anxiety, assuring concern and the full support of professional staff. The staff gets in touch with the relatives and provides advice to them on the enquirers. The Edwenase Rehabilitation Centre acts as intermediary between the parties until the problem is resolved and that they can cohabitate. They also provide education to the inmate of the rehabilitation centre to get abreast with society.

My primary task was to conduct literacy and numeracy classes for the students. As there were other volunteers on the project we organised an assessment, created small groups and began to work. It has been a great experience for me. With the various range of disabilities – physical resulting from childhood polio, cerebral palsy, learning difficulties, Attention Deficit Disorder, autism, Down syndrome, deafness, blindness- teaching was a challenge in the beginning. How to explain abstract nouns like „tomorrow” to deaf students? How to communicate with blind ones whose English is very basic? After the initial difficulties we have become more creative, together with students developed our ways of communicating and each lesson became a fascinating discovery for all of us. It was amazing for me that despite having little formal education, the majority was very keen on learning, loved getting homework and often wanted to do extra work in the evenings.



Looking back – Recognizing the EVS experience

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

Margaret, Kenyan volunteer in Austria

I have learnt how to deal with children with a different cultural background than my own. It was not as easy but finally I was able to.. I have also learnt some attributes about myself which has helped me to grow as an individual.

Generally, my experience in Austria is really great. And it is at this particular time, after 5 months, that I feel that I am finally in the system. It took me such a long time but now I am enjoying every single bit of it. I try as much as possible to use every opportunity I have to give a little about my culture

and to get something back. I cannot be like a sponge that keeps taking and doesn't give.. It can never be enough even if I was to live here for another one or two years...its always something new every day.

*And the weather is way much better and I find myself with so much energy within me. I am thankful for this experience. I will take with me so much more than I brought to Austria...**thanks to EVS :)***

Felicity, British volunteer in South Africa

EVS has given me a lot more confidence and really helped me to learn more about myself and how I interact with others. I think that I have grown a lot as a person over the past nine months and for the better. I am better at considering the views of others, at expressing myself and at putting myself out there to take opportunities.

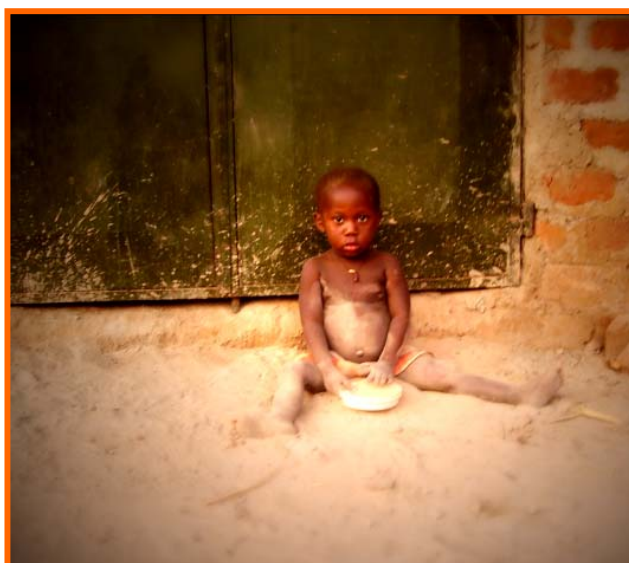
I would highly recommend EVS to other young people. It is a brilliant opportunity to travel and see the world whilst making a difference.** It is a great introduction to what work is like in the NGO field in developing countries, but it is done with a lot of support and help. **I think EVS is a brilliant scheme and if I could go again I would.

Karin Björnberg, Swedish volunteer in South Africa

I think that my English has improved and I feel more comfortable now than when I first arrived in South Africa. I also think that the planning, research and writing I have done in English will help me when I am applying for work. I am sure that spending 9 months in South Africa has had a great impact on me, but it is difficult to say how. I feel more relaxed and less stressed in South Africa than in Europe, something that I hope I will bring with me to Sweden. I am also more sure of what I want to work with, gaining more experience in my field have helped me make that decision.

Kadri, Estonian volunteer in Uganda:

For myself, my personal development was definitely the biggest achievement during this experience. Going alone to live in another country and culture is a great challenge and makes you stronger in every way. I learnt to stand up for myself, to care less about other's opinion and to count on myself. I found out so much about myself, my strengths and weaknesses, what I like and don't like. I had a lot of time to be alone and think, which I never had in Europe, so many things got a lot clearer to me. I am more self-confident and know better what I want from life.



I am so grateful to EVS for this amazing opportunity and experience. For me it was a dream coming true and I found everything I went looking for. It was a bigger success than I had expected. I would recommend EVS to everyone with the similar interests and I have no complaints about EVS.

Maarit, Finish volunteer in Kenya:

I'm very happy about the amount of things I learned at the CRADLE, especially on Human Rights the Law and Child Rights in general. Particularly when I had no background in law, I really feel I made some progress in the regard at the CRADLE though I feel I need to seriously update my knowledge regarding the laws in Finland too.

Following the media papers, Standard and Daily Nation I got quite good update on Kenyan issues in general and a much better understanding of the country and it's history than what I had before. I learned more about creating awareness material and project planning and monitoring and NGO work in general.

Tolupe, Nigerian volunteer in Belgium:

I was able to achieve lots of things in my EVS project. [...] Personally I realised the I had learnt to look at situations broadly, I learnt how to interact with people of different culture and background. I was able to socialise in the environment I was in. [...] The influence I had from the project was so great that I thought of doing something similar in my country. The thought that young girls need education, moral and emotional support in every way. My awareness about the European and international has increased a lot because I was able to know more about their function and how they

*operate. [...] I have experienced new things that affected my life in a positive way. **I realised new potentials that was innate in me and therefore I would recommend EVS to other young people.** It makes one realise that there are dreams that could come to pass and one could also achieve a lot in life by mere leaving a familiar arena to an unfamiliar one. It broadens one's horizon and makes one see in a different and better way.*

Celeste, Italian volunteer in Kenya:

The whole experience was very useful for me. I learnt to speak better English and it was also interesting to know a bit of this new language Swahili. I also learnt a lot about the culture of different tribes, their traditional dances, food, way of thinking and so on. I'm glad about this. I'm sure

that this experience will be very helpful in my future because, even if there is no established plan, I'd like to be a teacher to be with the students, to be close to a "world" that I really love, a world of knowledge and exchange.

Newsletter of Volunteer Centre South Africa by Felicity Butt

Felicity's story: UK to SA

Volunteers Week

1 – 7 June 09

Volunteer Centre – Head Office

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To be honest I did not know a lot about South Africa before I arrived. As I told people about where I was to spend 9 months, they all warned me about the violence and crime in South Africa. However I was still too excited to let this sink in, and wanted to keep an open mind, after all I was going to Africa! In my experience, when I scratched a little deeper I saw that South Africa is a warm and welcoming place with a wealth that is not measured in money but in the smiles and kindness of strangers, in the music played on the trains and buses as an expression of the many cultures and the sheer happiness of the people, for the beauty in the scenery like the clouds over Table Mountain that make it change its look three or four times a day. I was placed with a Children's Rights organisation in Diep River, called Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN). RAPCAN, is a well established NGO aiming to prevent child abuse and neglect. I was placed with the research and advocacy department. It was clear that this was going to be a desk job and I could easily do that back home but once again however I was gladly proved wrong. As part of my job I have conducted research on the situation of children in the Western Cape, which was very interesting and informative, I have attended community workshops, even helped design resources for them which was a very enjoyable experience, I have also presented reports to the department of education. I have been furnished with so many new skills, researching and writing reports, facilitating workshops, designing curriculum and so on but I really got to see the hard work and process that goes into making a difference in the community. Thanks to the Volunteer Centre, I was able to be part of something great in the community!

5. Final Meeting in Berlin

At the 26th –29th of June the project had come to an end and it was time to evaluate the volunteers' experiences and recognize the outcome of this project.

For most of the volunteers this meeting was the first opportunity to see familiar faces from before the EVS experience.



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 flipchart presentations were complemented with photos and printed material the volunteers had brought along as well as in some cases with video and thus provided us with a good insight regarding the impact of the volunteers' work in the respective host organisations.

Some highlights of these presentations were:

Aktivspielplatz Bongani

Activities

- Sports (soccer, Poker, Trampoline)
- Work (Cooking, Baking, Painting, Fixing bikes)
- Help (Homework, Pay attention)

My main achievements

- To try and overcome the situation
- Try and show the way to speaking, playing and understanding
- Communication
- Respect
- To show how to pay attention to animals and to others
- Genuine opportunity to make children believe in themselves



Lehtimaen Opisto Folk Boarding School Sarah Birabue

Aims

- Offer education to the special students (formal and informal)
- Offer physical therapy – horse riding
- Teach the special students how to live independently
- Boost their hobbies, music, games, etc.
- Associate with people amongst themselves

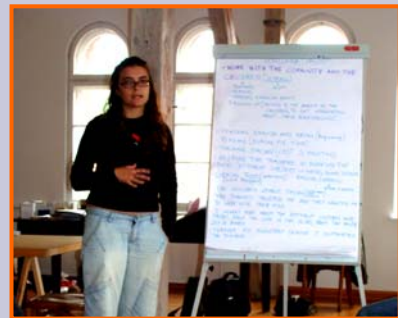
Achievements

- Special care and deal with special people (handicapped)
- Language: Finnish
- Horse riding
- Music, guitar, drums, Finnish songs
- Cooking
- Culture, Sauna
- Friends
- Independence
- Expression skills
- Personal development

Angaza Trust Celeste Zaccaria

Tasks

- Teaching English and maths (beginning)
- Playing (during P.E. time)
- Teaching Italian (last 5 months)
- Helping the teachers in making the books (different subject: Maths, social studies, English, Swahili – after 3 months)
- Cooking food (sometimes)



Achievements

- The children learnt Italian (mother tongue, Swahili, English)
- The parents trusted me and they wanted me to work with their kids.
- I learnt more about the different cultures and tribes, about the life in the slums, about the mentality of poverty
- Through my voluntary service I supported the teachers



Volunteer Centre, South Africa Felicity Butt

My tasks

- Researching a range of issues
- Help facilitate community meetings
- Write submissions
- Design curriculum
- Attend meetings – government, community, other organisations
- My achievements
- Curriculum design could be incorporated into national curriculum
- Research on CP will help change law
- Know more about project management



My achievements

- Curriculum design could be incorporated into national curriculum
- Research on CP will help change law
- Know more about project management

Outside of work

- Travel
- Confidence

Pictures of various Activities



Poncho:

Participants formed pairs and were asked to prepare a Poncho and to draw on it the most important symbols of their EVS experience regarding the cultural differences encountered. This then was presented in plenary and led to a group reflection about how participants coped with the different environment and developed strategies to overcome problems.





Flowers of experience:

Participants were asked to write the learning experience which they had most appreciated and were most proud of on a self-made flower, and then to pour water on it. Some of the individual pieces of art can be seen here above!

6. Final Conclusion

This project proved once again that volunteering is a good and useful way of gaining life experience, which reflects in the testimonies of the volunteers who contributed to this documentation. They mentioned that EVS was an enriching and fulfilling experience they would never want to miss. Although experiencing hard and difficult times, facing problems and misunderstandings with different aspects of living and working in a different society and culture, being alone and far from home, 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.

The journey from the first encounter with the host community to the farewell was a constant learning experience. Volunteers learned to understand themselves better, their own identity, where they come from and what is essential for them in relation to the other culture they encountered. By working in teams with local volunteers they also learnt that rather than "helping the local people" (which was a motivation particularly when coming from Europe) they needed help to be able to survive and to be helpful in the unknown surrounding - learning that Europeans and Africans can join hands for a common cause – in this case for the benefit of children world wide.

Volunteers were particularly happy to be able to take something home with them – having grown on personal as well as on professional level but at the same time to have contributed to an important cause – promoting and supporting the respect to children rights. It is difficult to measure or put such outcomes into a diploma. They will however have a lasting impact on the volunteers' future.



7. Participation List

EU-AFRICA EVS Programme on Youth and Children's Rights 2008/2009:

Volunteers	Host Country	Project	Sending org / country
Margaret Nguthu	Austria	Kindergruppe Farblecks	ICYE Kenya
Tolupe Agbebi	Belgium	YWCA- Antwerpen	ICYE Nigeria
Sarah Birabwe	Finland	Lehtimäen Opisto	ICYE Uganda
Bongani Nkosi	Germany	Aktivspielplatz Raitelsberg	Volunteer centre South Africa
Estefania Rosita Conjo	Italy	Associazione Volontarius	ICYE Mozambique
Mogamad Nazeem Dudley	Poland	Jedrus Boarding School	Volunteer Centre South Africa
Ruth Odofoley Nortey	Sweden	IKU / ICYE Sweden	ICYE Ghana
Dorota Gadzinowska	Ghana	Edwenase Rehabilitation Centre	FIYE Poland
Mattia Cason	Ghana	Edwenase Rehabilitation Centre	AFSAI Italy
Celeste Zaccaria	Kenya	Angaza Trust	AFSAI Italy
Maarit Roström	Kenya	The Cradle Children Foundation	ICYE Finland
Dario Femminó	Mozambique	ASDECUMO	AFSAI Italy
Eeva Maria Kuokkanen	Mozambique	ASDECUMO / Mozarte	ICYE Finland
Lisa Ewertson	Nigeria	Hearts of Gold Children's Hospice	ICYE Sweden
Sonja Schwald	Nigeria	Anglo Nigeria Welfare Association for the Blind	Grenzenlos Austria
Felicity Butt	South Africa	Volunteer Centre	ICYE UK
Karin Björnberg	South Africa	Volunteer Centre	IKU / ICYE Sweden
Kadri Miller	Uganda	Namayumba Village	ESTYES
Christine Wöhrer	Uganda	Kiyumbakimu Children's Village	Grenzenlos Austria

8. Contact and Copyrights

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http://www.icye.org/eng/res_publications.html

For information on the EVS Programme:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc82_en.htm

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