

# Worlds of experience



No. 28 (June 2012)

## INDEX

### EDITORIAL

#### VOLUNTEERS VOICES on

"Volunteering for peace and understanding"

#### More on

"Volunteering for peace and understanding"

- Global movement for a culture of peace and non-violence.
- Sustainable peace for a sustainable future.
- UNOY - Peace Builders.
- 2012: 10th Anniversary of the World Day for Cultural Diversity.

#### News From International Organizations

- Marking the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers.
- The UNESCO Youth Forum. Celebrating a decade of youth participation
- 20 to 22 June 2012 - Rio+20 - United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- Make your actions count at Rio+20 - Volunteer Action Counts.
- Get involved in the European Year 2012! Adult Volunteering: Learning for Life.
- UN holds first Youth ECOSOC Forum.
- Youth Employment Forum.

#### News From NGOs

- New Survey Launched on Non-Formal Education and Employability!
- Cultural Values and Volunteering: A Cross-cultural Comparison of Students Motivation to Volunteer in 13 Countries.
- Gender Equity Index 2012 launched
- World Congress of NGOs, Nairobi, Kenya, 5 to 8 July 2012.
- Time for a new social contract CIVICUS report "State of Civil Society 2011".

#### ICYE PROGRAMME NEWS

- EYV 2011 - Volunteering Matters! 16 Volunteers Action-Research Country Reports.
- EVS project "Youth and Intergenerational Solidarity".
- 1st International Conference- Volunteering, Social Capital and Human Development.
- UNITED Conference in Turkey: Where Do We Stand? A Map For Human Rights.
- ICYE Japan Reunion and 50th Anniversary Party.

#### ICYE FEDERATION STAFF NEWS



"This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein."

Dear Friends,

With the 28th issue of "Worlds of Experience" we focus our attention on "Volunteering for Peace and Understanding". As actors in the field, we tend to share the belief that volunteering can have a real and lasting impact on people's lives and that it furthers peace, understanding and solidarity among people and communities. The inevitable diversity of globalized societies is rife with ambiguities and tensions. Conflicts, misunderstandings in communication or varying interests which often collide find support in stereotypes circulating in the public sphere. Differences and different needs of people are not accepted, and often remain unaddressed. Change is not easy as it involves giving up our old and familiar ways of conscious and unconscious behaviour. We believe that volunteering takes a small step in initiating such change. It can help shape a better world, a world of mutual respect and understanding by changing perspectives and outlook on the world.

In "Volunteers Voices" we take pleasure in presenting essays by seven volunteers, who narrate how they perceive their volunteering to have impacted on their own lives and the lives of others, and how they feel they further a world of peace, unity and social justice.

A volunteer in Denmark tells us that "'wanting' to know each other" is the way to peace and justice. For another in Vietnam, volunteering is an antidote to the sometimes ugly face of tourism. Another in Finland emphasizes that creative thinking, intercultural dialogue and conflict resolutions skills are needed to maintain peace in any society. A volunteer in Germany recommends that you turn off your TV and log out of "fb" as they hinder social interaction. This will help you tune into new realities and enable a "real" exchange between people. Along the same lines, a volunteer in Colombia believes that understanding entails an exchange of stories. A former volunteer in South Africa tells it like it is: she felt the heavy weight of historical responsibilities, of a eurocentric worldview, of pretensions to "help Africa" by imposing one's views and values, and the only way to counter these, she suggests, is to avoid generalisations and dismantle prejudices. Lastly, another volunteer in Colombia tells us that she has a mission to accomplish on her return home: breaking down negative images and stereotypes. Let's all join hands in the struggle against prejudices and to create a world of peace, understanding and respect.

News from International Organisations feature, among others: the commemorative Compendium on the 2011 IYV+10; the UNESCO Youth Forum; Rio+20 the UN Conference on Sustainable Development; the publication on "Adult Volunteering: Learning for Life - The Grundtvig programme's contribution to the European Year of Volunteering 2011"; and the Youth Employment Forum.

News from NGOs report on: a recent survey on non-formal education and employability; the Gender Equity Index 2012; the world Congress of NGOs, and the "state of Civil Society 2011" by CIVICUS.

ICYE Programme News include: 16 Action-Research country reports on volunteering by EVS/ICYE volunteers; the launching of the EVS multilateral project "Youth and Intergenerational Solidarity"; ICYE Colombia's participation in the IAVE Conference on "Volunteering, Social Capital and Human Development"; a report on the UNITED Conference "Where do we stand? A Map for Human Rights"; and ICYE Japan's 50th Anniversary celebration.

Wishing you an interesting and inspiring reading! We would like to encourage readers to send us articles and pictures for the next issue of "Worlds of Experience", dedicated to "Active Citizenship through Volunteering" and to be published at the end of October 2012.

Please send your contributions to [icye@icye.org](mailto:icye@icye.org), before September 30<sup>th</sup> 2012.

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)

# "Volunteering for Peace and Understanding"

## VOLUNTEERS VOICES

### "Volunteering for change"

Nowadays we live in a globalized and interconnected world. The "information era" is now a reality; and technology inventions like the TV or the Internet are reducing drastically the social interaction. Everybody is always busy watching TV, or checking what's wrong with their friends on "fb". But, how many of them are really paying attention to what's wrong around them? Or even what's wrong around the world?

Volunteering is an opportunity to open your eyes to a new reality, to exchange with a new culture, to be immersed in its life and traditions, to learn about it; and therefore to destroy PREJUDICES that separate us as human beings.

Some of the main problems concerning intercultural differences around the world are a consequence of the disrespect for different political ideologies, religions, costumes, and traditions, etc. Through volunteering, you can help a social cause you believe in, in many different fields, at the same time you are learning one of the most important things for peace and understanding; RESPECT.

There is a concept called "cultural relativism". It says that there are a lot of different cultures around the world, all of them of course very different one from another; different costumes, traditions, ideologies, religions... And it is relative to each person – based on his perception – whether these different lifestyles, religions, etc. are good or bad, right or not. BUT, the main idea behind this concept is that we have to be respectful to them, we get to learn to live together and respect each other.

It doesn't matter if you are volunteering "here" or "there", inside or outside your country. Volunteering is a great opportunity to learn about each other, to face new challenges, a time for you, for reflection, change and personal growth. A time to think and re-think things. A time to learn how to deal with differences and respect them. A time to break stereotypes and prejudices. An opportunity to open our eyes to our international reality, full of political manipulation, misinformation from the media, social



injustice...But most important of all, an opportunity to help, and to learn while helping.

Turn off your TV for a while; stop playing your video games; close that fashion magazine; log out of "fb". Volunteer inside or outside your country! Volunteer for peace and understanding! Be part of the change!

*Alexander Barquero, ICYE Costa Rican volunteer in Germany.*

### "7 weeks in Hanoi"

Once in my life I go to a country where people are in need; to do something that really matters. Give people a picture of foreigners who really care for them, try to understand and help them. This wish got stronger when my daughter worked in India and in South Africa.

Other than the usual ICYE youth exchange, I found that the STEPs-programme has no age limit. So there you know I am in my fifties and not the usual kind of volunteer – at least until then I had never heard of volunteers my age. Still, it was a great change from my life, and at the perfect time. I am a university teacher, and after living for twenty years at the same place in a quiet little town in Switzerland with my family, garden, friends and some social and cultural engagement, I felt it was time for a change. I wanted to do something completely different, something socially relevant for the benefit of people who might need it. When I was young, I travelled quite a bit, now it is my children's turn, as they are over twenty. So why not take the chance?

There is one thing for which my age made a difference: I did not quite like the idea of living in a host family without a private room, while I know I would have enjoyed this possibility of contact years ago. Now I prefer a little privacy at night. Therefore I chose a project which offers dormitories. You are placed in a dormitory with volunteers from different countries. Of course, you learn less of the language and are less forced to share the local everyday way of life. But I have had the chance to meet local families by trying to speak Vietnamese.



Most other things are the same for me as for other volunteers. You make a decision and are prepared for a challenge, open for new impressions, and ready to give what you can to those who are in need. Volunteers are sociable, friendly, reliable and more or less easy to get on with. This is true among the group, but it is also the impression we make in the local population. They like us, I feel, when we ride in the bus, when we try to say some words in their language, when we eat and go to places like them. And I being older than the other volunteers make the message of our understanding and friendliness among generations more complete, as it works not only in one direction. So I know I made a very good choice in going as a volunteer to Vietnam.

And this is what we experience in Hanoi. Sometimes some of the young women are a bit reserved at the beginning, as I am representing their parents' generation. But as soon as they see that I am just as any other volunteer, sharing the same ideals, the ice melts. The young ladies showed me how to get on the bus (and when to leave it, it's really very complicated) and helped me cross the street. Now I am able to teach the newcomers, for this knowledge you can't get without the legendary traffic in Hanoi.

There are many organizations dedicated to development and welfare in Hanoi. I am here working for VPV, Volunteers for Peace in Vietnam, and the office takes care of us: We have a wonderful cook at every dorm, we get tutored at the beginning, help whenever needed, and, what I like most, Vietnamese lessons. But much more important is, of course, what we contribute here to a social organization. Many of my colleagues work in schools as assistant teachers and mostly in schools for children with special needs or in institutions for the elderly or disabled. Quite a few of us work in an NGO, like I do, where we try to find funds for social projects and design them. I enjoy this very much, as we see the effects of what we do and because the organization I am in covers a wide range of projects: Social, environmental, sustainable issues, education, health, and ecotourism are planned or already implemented. At the moment we are involved in a project that seeks to motivate young Vietnamese to become engaged in this kind of work themselves.

Vietnam has suffered badly from the wars. And the country is in rebuilding. There is much growth in many sectors, in industry as in tourism. But both of them have their threats. Volunteering is a counterpart to the sometimes ugly face of tourism. We give a different sense to travelling, the sense of bringing something we have, doing something we can, and meeting people with understanding. And they know the difference.

*Pia Holenstein, Swiss volunteer in Vietnam*

### **"Exchanging stories"**

We are living in a world full of global challenges like natural disasters, climate change, economic crisis, shifts of power, scarce resources and terrorism – problems that can only be handled by all nations working together. Therefore, it is imperative to learn from each other, live together

peacefully and respect each other. One step is to do voluntary service in your community and help the people in need or to participate in exchange programs. I am a great believer in exchange programs! During my experiences abroad I have realized how much those trips have influenced the lives and perspectives of so many people, helping to get a better understanding of each other's culture.



Here in Colombia I am volunteering for the NGO Tanai Jawa Corporation (Chibcha "Good Heart"). It is a private organization located in Bogotá with experience in implementing intervention strategies for people living in vulnerable conditions. During my first six months in Colombia I was working in Sora, a little village situated in the rural area of the department of Boyacá. The project called "Instrumentos de Paz" (Peace Tools) was initiated by the corporation to provide local sustainable development to children exposed to various risk factors (psychoactive substances, teenage pregnancies, alcoholism, school dropouts, abuse, inequality and mistreatment, among others). I was working with another German volunteer and a Colombian student of psychology. Together we went to all eight schools of the village to teach English to children between the ages of 5 and 12, and do activities connected to the "Habilidades de la Vida" (Skills for life) program. As foreigners it was easier for us to teach them songs, play games, do arts and crafts and learn new vocabulary. They were always so excited to see us and kept asking many questions: how many hours does it take by plane to get to Germany? What is the food like? How do we celebrate Christmas? It was tremendously rewarding to get to talk to them about so many cultural topics, and in this way, reach a better recognition of their culture and of my own. Through various topics, e.g. get to know my body – what are your likes and dislikes, we could get a glimpse of how living in the countryside is like. Sometimes discipline was difficult as it was hard for them to concentrate. Some children had serious problems at home and they would often help their parents on the fields in the afternoons.

One of the most rewarding activities with the kids was 'Vuelta al Mundo' (Around the World); it was a lot of fun! We would meet with children and adolescents at the library of the village and take a look at various countries of the world. Where is it



situated? What is so special? What differences and similarities are there compared to Colombia? What games do children play? Sometimes they had the chance to talk and ask questions directly via Skype to people living in those countries. Unfortunately due to the new elected mayor and different interests, the project in Sora ended at the beginning of this year. I can only hope that their dreams of studying at the university and going abroad become true for at least some of the children and that the project can be implemented in other areas of Colombia.



At the moment I am supporting Tanai Jawa with administrative work at their office in Bogotá. During workshops on working with young people and on voluntary work in the capital I got to know many local social organizations with the same aim – longing and working hard for peace, justice and better conditions for all citizens. Surely Colombia is confronted with a different level of social problems and people living in vulnerability. Often there are no resources to support their projects, and dependency on donations is disadvantageous as people fear corruption. I am teaching colleagues and friends English, they are very motivated to learn and improve their knowledge. With the English language they have access to more information, e.g. on the internet, can get in contact with international organizations and are able to exchange peaceful ideas. I translated the website into English so now more foreigners can learn about the work of Tanai Jawa and new relations can be built.

I believe that part of understanding is to exchange our stories. A lot of Colombian people are honored that I am getting to know their culture; they want me to tell everyone what their country and culture is really like. People have been approaching me and asking me where I am from, what languages I speak, what my country is like, and I am happy to talk about my story over and over again. In exchange I am getting to know more and more stories and opinions on different topics that thanks to the internet I share with my friends and family in Germany.

*Claudia Schulz, German volunteer in Colombia*

## **"My volunteering experience – Just do it!"**



Oh, my life in Finland has been so different from my life in Moldova! I am Cristina Olari from Moldova, one of the EVS volunteers in Finland! My EVS project is soon over and I can say that the project has been great. My work and my whole experience during my volunteering year have been different, great, difficult, funny, something new, and something that I cannot explain in words – something I can just feel.

This project has given me the opportunity to discover a culture of peace. What is this? This means that every single volunteer who comes to another country contributes in his/her own way to peace, tolerance, respect, and understanding among people, as much as possible.

I have learnt a lot about peace and understanding. All volunteers have a chance to deepen their understanding of peace and contribute to it. For example, for me it means to obtain skills, attitudes, and values that are needed in order to contribute to establishing peace and helping to maintain it. For example, non-violent conflict resolution, creative thinking, and intercultural dialogue. And this is very important in volunteering!

About my work in Ruskeasuon koulu, which is a school for physically disabled children and youth in Helsinki, I can just say WOW! To help someone who really needs you and who is really happy because you are there makes you better and gives you the best feelings. From my workplace I have got more experience than I thought I would.

During my volunteering experience I have made a lot of foreign friends. Now I can understand every English accent from every country and this is great! These ten months of my life have been amazing. I have discovered many things in me which I have not known about before. This experience has made me stronger. I feel like I have matured. That girl who came to Finland has grown. This EVS project has given me many opportunities to get to know myself better, to get to know Finland and of course to get to know the world.

In the beginning of my project I thought about the winter. Everybody told me: Are you ready for the

winter? I was so scared. But if I now think about the winter, I do not remember if it was cold or not for me because I enjoyed the winter as much as I could. I remember that when I arrived in Finland, in the first camp which was held in August in Lappeenranta, it was already cold for me and I was thinking "what I will do in the winter time?" Now I realise that at that time it was really hot. :)

I was so surprised when I started with the process for my Finnish ID because everybody said to me: "WOW! Don't you have any relation with Finland? Your name and last name are so Finnish. Really they are." I was feeling so famous here with my passport.

When you are a volunteer, you do not just learn about the culture of the host country but you also learn about other cultures because you meet many volunteers from different countries. Soon I will go back to Moldova. I am happy because I miss my country, but at the same time I am sad to leave Finland. So, now I am feeling very nostalgic. Finally, this has been a great experience for me. I have good memories. I am going home with lots of friends from different countries and with a lot of experience. I will never forget you, FINLAND! KIITOS!!!

*Cristina Olari, EVS volunteer from Moldova in Finland*

### **"It is not only the help"**



White and tall windmills; thousands of bikers in the cities; pretty houses with well-maintained gardens in the countryside; comfortable trains – these are just several examples of the image of one of the wealthiest countries in Europe. Yes, you are right. It is Denmark. So the question that I was often asked sounds like this: "Are you a volunteer in Denmark? Why? Denmark doesn't need volunteers, because there are not so many people who need help." But volunteering is not only about the help; it involves matters such as development, learning, understanding, perspectives and attitudes. Usually these matters are invisible and intangible, however they are very important and they are reflected in our behavior and actions. Actions that influence the world we live in.

When I came from Lithuania to Denmark, I settled in a project called "Husmandsstedet". In short, it is an activity house for everyone, but mostly for

children. It is like their "free time house", where they do everything that they want to do. As a volunteer, I have a much more important task than just helping with daily tasks and jobs. This task involves many different elements, for example, openness, knowledge and cultural understanding. Here is a simple example - by spending almost the whole working week together with me, children learn something that will be important in their future life. Firstly, having a person from a different country is important for their awareness of other countries apart from Denmark. If they have never heard where Lithuania is located, at least they find out that this country exists somewhere in Europe. And this is the first step towards knowledge about the surrounding world. Moreover, by observing me, asking me questions and interacting with me children learn not only about me, but also about my culture, which (hopefully) increases their interest, broadens and opens their minds. All these things lead to a better understanding of each other, of different cultures and peace. Because only by knowing each other and even more importantly – by WANTING to know each other – people can obtain peace and justice. And as a volunteer, I feel that I contribute to it.



Besides the project environment, there are more than enough activities that have a huge influence on development, perspectives and outlook. Sport activities, seminars and camps for volunteers, language school, parties, dinners, bars, trips, meetings and other gatherings – everywhere you meet people from all over the world. Imagine a room with 20 people - from Asia, Africa, Europe and America. All of them are so different, but very similar at the same time, because they are together. They are able to share their attitudes, they are able to listen to each other and learn from each other. And this is the unity. The unity that is necessary for peace and understanding. When a simple conversation about what people eat in Mexico or Lithuania concludes with a serious discussion on the history, political situation or poverty in different countries, it proves that there is something that unites all of us. And being a volunteer gives us the possibility to feel this unity.

Right now, it is still a little bit hard to name the exact qualities I gained, the qualifications I obtained or the things I learned. Some more time should pass. However, one thing is obvious – being a volunteer had a great influence on me. And it is

also the other way around – as a volunteer I had a great influence on the people I met.

*Radvile Gintauskaite, Lithuanian volunteer in Denmark*

### **“Respecting Diversity: A way to build a place of peace”**

My experience as a volunteer in South Africa made me realize the tremendous impact that international volunteering has on all the people playing their different roles within the framework of the project.

I think the most interesting aspect is that of the interaction between people from very different geographic and cultural backgrounds; an interaction that often generates a change in the social context as well as in the life of individuals, and which fosters revolutionary processes such as the broadening of personal horizons, re-thinking of one's identity and breaking down prejudices. For sure, all the above-mentioned processes act on the level of mutual respect towards diversity; a concept that gains special value in South Africa where differences have been portrayed as criminal for a long time and have been manipulated by the ruling white minority during the apartheid era. During my conversations with local people that were hosting international volunteers, I perceived the presence of foreigners as a medium to debunk very old deep-rooted myths and to dismantle mind-sets that have been passed down from generation to generation. For instance, some people have attitudes that can be seen as the legacy of a really painful past but that can be changed through steady contact with diversity. A black woman living in a township told me about the first time she hosted a white person (a volunteer) in her house and how scared she was to relate to her at the beginning. Until then, she had lived only in subordinate relationships with white people so it was a totally new thing for her to handle equal relations with the young lady. And hosting volunteers coming from all over the world helped her to acquire self-confidence and gave her a new perspective on human relationships. Besides, Cape Town has a really complex society, composed of the different communities that are for the most part identified through the racial groups living there and that sometimes act like microcosms which, for historical reasons, barely interact amongst themselves.



In this case, volunteers have the power to spread knowledge and information among the communities and to make them communicate. I refer, for instance, to volunteers who are hosted, for example, in a coloured community while housed in hosting organizations that operate and serve black communities. Thus they have the chance to stay in contact with black culture, to get to know people of that community and to report their experience to their host families, who may never have been there or are not used to visiting and spending time in places different from their own. Sometimes the curiosity of young volunteers and their will to discover local cultures can have a contagious effect on people belonging to local communities and can work as a way of breaking through the reserve that some have about moving to unknown areas of the city.



Volunteering abroad affects the lives and beliefs of young people in different ways. Personally, I see my six-month experience in South Africa as an internal travel that made me analyse my way of thinking and to re-think my identity. Somehow I started to think of myself in a general perspective, taking into account the history of my country, the colour of my skin not only as a physical feature but also as a social belonging. For the first time, I saw myself through the eyes of other people and sometimes I felt the heavy weight of historical responsibilities, of my roots as a “white European person”. This feeling often made me think long about our eurocentric view of the world and in particular about our pretensions to “help Africa” by imposing our points of views and values. The greatest lessons that volunteers learn from this kind of experience is avoiding any generalization by trying to learn from local people with a heart and mind that is free of prejudices. In order to build a place of peace, it is important to get a true understanding of the history of a country, to be aware of the pitfalls of the past and start by respecting the diversity of values and customs.

*Elena Bruno, EVS Italian volunteer in South Africa*

### **“Achieving social justice in Colombia: a matter of shared responsibilities”**

First and Third World, developed and developing countries, global North and global South. These are terms frequently used when talking about global injustice and the unequal distribution of global wealth. In the 21st century, statistics still paint a



gloomy picture: for instance, 925 million people suffer from hunger, even though on a global scale, enough food is produced to feed everyone. It is also frequently cited that the so-called developed countries are mainly liable: unjust trade policies and unfair consumption practices lead to the ever-increasing impoverishment of the world's hungry.

When I came to Colombia, these abstract terms and statistics came to life and vividly materialized themselves. Being Hungarian, I had been familiar with the sight of extreme poverty, be it unpaved streets, children in torn clothes, houses falling apart. Unfortunately, this is not an exceptional scene in many ghettoized villages in the east of Hungary. However, I still remember the first time I entered Bosa, one of the poorest districts on the southern-western margins of Bogotá. The intensity and magnitude of poverty left me speechless and even after four months of living in Bogotá, there are moments when I relive the shock of the first experiences.



The statistics yet again depict a sad reality: it is safe to say that every second person in Bogotá can be considered poor, meaning that his or her basic needs are hardly met. To a large extent, poverty in Bogotá is tied to displacement. Since the 70ies, a huge number of people have been arriving every day to the capital, fleeing the violence induced by the conflict between narco-traffickers, the guerilla and the army. The population of the city tripled in the last 20-30 years, and for many of the newcomers, their move to the city only brought continuous misery.

This is the local context of my hosting organization, Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes (Young Men's Christian Association). I work as a volunteer in the Youth Area, which is one of the subdivisions of the organization. They are present in 7 different neighborhoods in Bogotá. In some places, they work closely with the daycare centers of ACJ, in others; they operate without a fixed place. Their basic aim is to create and strengthen youth groups that take collective action and engage themselves for their communities. Their mission is openly political: however, in their terminology, politics does not simply mean party politics. It encompasses all actions that have the collective good in their focus. To reach their theoretical aim, they, first, create and support youth groups that are based on some shared interest (hip hop,

capoeira, basketball). Thereafter, they educate the leaders of these informal youth groups and motivate them to actively participate in spaces of collective action (for instance, in the local youth councils). As a volunteer, I am placed in four different neighbourhoods, and my main task is to teach English classes for youngsters. Besides this, I also help with everyday office tasks, I am involved with fundraising, and I often find myself in the role of an informal cultural ambassador, as I am constantly bombarded with questions about the reality of my country and Europe in general.



*The four months, I have spent in Colombia have meant a lot to me. Both professionally and personally, there have been countless inspirational moments, just to name a few of them:*

Receiving a candy, a piece of chocolate, something and anything from pupils of my English class as the only thing that matters is their will to give.

Talking to a single mom, who travels an hour or even 90-minutes every day, back and forth, to attain the high school diploma, but when talking about this experience her eyes are shining, and one doesn't feel any regret or complaint.

Asking an 8-year old girl about her daily routine, and getting to know that she gets up every day at 4 am to take a shower, get dressed, then make breakfast for the whole family. But I don't mind, she adds, I like cooking.

But frankly speaking, I am often at unease, as well. When facing the complexity and depth of social problems in Colombia. I cannot help, but question myself. Have I given enough? What does my presence as a volunteer really mean? Is my contribution merely a drop in the ocean?

*Debating these questions, I came to an important conclusion. Finishing my voluntary service must not be the end; rather it is supposed to be the beginning of an equally important work. I, as a volunteer, who has been granted the privilege to personally discover and experience Colombia, have the obligation to share my knowledge upon my return. More importantly, I need to show in what ways, we, "Europeans", contribute to the perpetuation of the Colombian conflict. In the European media, the armed conflict of Colombia is often presented as an isolated case of internal*

politics, and hardly anything is said about the sharing of responsibility. To make social justice and peace a reality in Colombia, rural poverty needs to be diminished, so that the farmers, who are at the moment involved in coca production, would have a viable alternative. We all have our job to do to make this happen. On a personal level, we can change our consumer choices and opt for fair trade products that guarantee a just income for the farmers. On an institutional level, we can pressurize our governments to create more just trade policies. Moreover, we can lobby for drug prevention and rehabilitation programs that would have a direct impact by reducing the demand for cocaine.

Last but not least, upon return, I have another mission to accomplish. I pledge to show people the wonders of Colombia. I will tell them about its vibrant culture, the amazing beats of its music, the beauty of its landscapes, the warmth and cordiality of its people. Breaking down negative images and stereotypes will be another way of giving back a bit of that which I received.

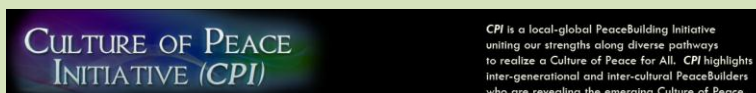
*Judit Koppány, an EVS volunteer from Hungary in Colombia.*

## More on „Volunteering for Peace and Understanding“



CPNN, the Culture of Peace News Network, is a space where readers exchange information about events, experiences, books, music, and web news that promote a culture of peace. It is a self-sustaining network in which You, the reader, are invited to [write a news report](#) and contribute to its [discussion](#), and eventually to become a [reporter](#). CPNN is a project of the United Nations [International Decade](#) for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

## Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future



Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future is the United Nation's 2012 theme for the International Day of Peace (September 21). This is an important theme for our times which you can build upon. What ideas does this bring to mind? What can you create, what actions can you take to bring this theme to life? There is an added dimension if we take this theme in relation to a Culture of Peace, and view it through the Peace Wheel from Pathways To Peace. Let us know what Sustainable Peace looks like to you when applied to GOVERNANCE, LAW, SECURITY, ENVIRONMENT, HABITAT, ECONOMICS or BUSINESS? Please send your comments to: [info@cultureofpeace.org](mailto:info@cultureofpeace.org) We will collect your suggestions and and post them in future newsletters. The Culture of Peace Initiative (CPI) is a cooperative local-global Peacebuilding Initiative uniting the strengths of organizations, networks, projects and people to realize a Culture of Peace for the Common Good. <http://cultureofpeace.org/>



UNOY Peacebuilders is a network of 49 youth-led organisations working towards establishing peaceful societies. Find out more about our mission, our members and our activities.

### Database of good practices

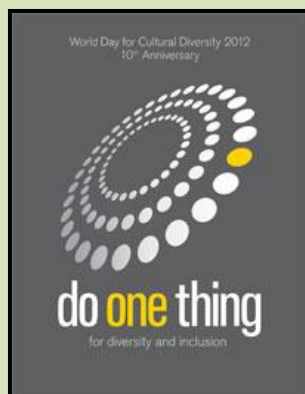
Young people are engaged in peace building activities worldwide. The World Report on Culture of Peace illustrated the plethora of youth peace initiatives and the need to share approaches, challenges and opportunities that young people face in building peace. United Network of Young Peacebuilders is building a database of best practices of youth involvement in peacebuilding and peace education... [Read more](#)

### Push4Peace

Push4Peace is a 90-day Call to Action that will be initiated on the International Day of Peace on September 21, 2012 .The aim of P4P is to reach one billion people to raise awareness of peace initiatives...[Read more](#)



## 2012: Tenth Anniversary of the World Day for Cultural Diversity



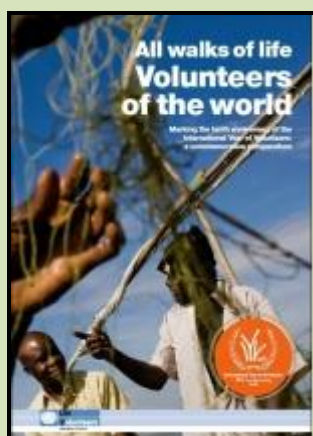
In 2001, UNESCO adopted the [Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity](#) and in December 2002, the UN General Assembly, in its resolution [57/249](#), declared May 21 to be the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. The day provides us with an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to learn to live together better. In 2011, a grassroots campaign 'Do One Thing For Diversity and Inclusion', celebrating the annual World Day for Cultural Diversity was launched by [UNESCO](#) and the [UN Alliance of Civilizations](#). The 2012 campaign, by encouraging people and organizations from around the world to take concrete action to support diversity, aims:

- To raise awareness worldwide about the importance of intercultural dialogue, diversity and inclusion.
- To build a world community of individuals committed to support diversity with real and every day-life gestures.
- To combat polarization and stereotypes to improve understanding and cooperation among people from different cultures.

The campaign works through a dedicated [Facebook page](#), serving as a platform for people around the world to share their experiences through posts and videos. [Read more](#)

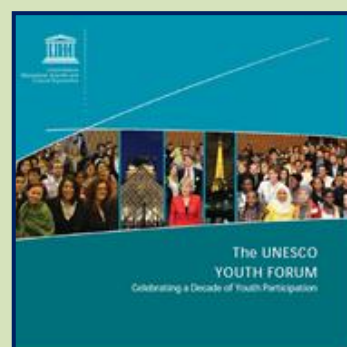
## News From International Organizations

### Marking the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers



Last year, 2011, marked 10 years since the International Year of Volunteers, and the United Nations called for this anniversary to be marked across the planet. The partners' continued aims are to promote and recognize volunteering's positive impact on peace and development, to reinforce volunteering networks, and to help all people make a difference through volunteering. *Source UNV* – click here to download the [commemorative compendium](#).

### The UNESCO Youth Forum. Celebrating a decade of youth participation



The UNESCO Youth Forum, held prior to UNESCO's General Conference, brings together young delegates from all over the world to exchange views, share experiences, reflect together and, above all, detect common preoccupations and problems. The event allows young people to voice their ideas and concerns and make suggestions directly to the UNESCO General Conference. Student engagement, social innovation, fostering democracy, youth employment, conflict and sustainable development are among the issues that have been discussed on the floor of the UNESCO Youth Forum. To view/download the publication, click [here](#).

**20 to 22 June 2012 - Rio+20 - United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**



The objective of Rio+20 is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and address new and emerging challenges. Rio+20 marks the 20th anniversary of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development - the Earth Summit - in Rio de Janeiro, and the 10th anniversary of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. *Source: [Rio+20](#)*

At the Rio+20 Conference, world leaders, along with thousands of participants from governments, the private sector, NGOs and other groups, will come together to shape how we can reduce poverty, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection on an ever more crowded planet to get to the future we want.

The Conference will focus on two themes: (a) [a green economy in the context of sustainable development poverty eradication](#); and (b) the [institutional framework for sustainable development](#). The preparations for Rio+20 have highlighted [seven areas](#) which need priority attention; these include decent jobs, energy, sustainable cities, food security and sustainable agriculture, water, oceans and disaster readiness

**Make your actions count at Rio+20 – Volunteer Action Counts**

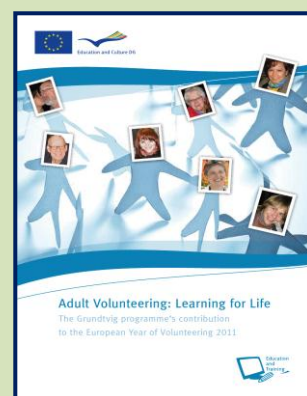


**The United Nations Volunteers programme** has launched a new multi-media campaign: [Volunteer Action Counts](#). The campaign is designed to showcase the importance of people's participation and volunteering towards the achievement of sustainable development at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20 in Brazil.

This campaign will give volunteers, communities and organizations the chance to showcase their current projects by gathering volunteering stories on the [Volunteer Action Counts website](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).

All the volunteer actions will be presented at Rio+20, where a multimedia presentation will showcase the counted voices of volunteers worldwide to the over 50,000 people participating at the summit. For additional technical details and how to partner with VAC, please contact Alba Candel Pau. ([alba.candelpau@unvolunteers.org](mailto:alba.candelpau@unvolunteers.org)).

**Get involved in the European Year 2012!  
Adult Volunteering: Learning for Life**



2012 is the European Year for Active Aging and Solidarity between Generations and is about taking action and making change happen so that we can build a more inclusive society for people of all ages. Moreover, you can also share with others what you are doing on the [website](#) for the European Year – and get inspiration for your own work from there!

The European Commission has recently launched a [publication](#) on "Adult Volunteering: Learning for Life - The Grundtvig programme's contribution to the European Year of Volunteering 2011", which showcases senior volunteering projects funded under the Grundtvig programme. Some EUCIS-LLL members' projects, like "[VALUE](#) – Volunteering and Lifelong Learning in Universities in Europe" or "[seVen](#) – Senior European Volunteers Exchange Network" are included in this publication.

## UN holds first Youth ECOSOC Forum



Under the theme "Empowering Youth with Better Job Opportunities" the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) held its first Youth Forum to give young people a platform to voice their concerns, experiences and ideas to tackle youth unemployment. More information is available [online](#).

## Youth Employment Forum



International  
Labour  
Organization



Over 100 young trade unionists, entrepreneurs, NGO members and others took part in the three-day gathering (23–25 May 2012) at the ILO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, to share their experiences and views on the employment crisis that has left 75 million youth jobless worldwide. [Read the full programme](#)

## News From NGOs

### New Survey Launched on Non-Formal Education and Employability!



The European Youth Forum recently launched a survey to analyse the impact of non-formal education on the employability of young people. The survey gives youth organisations the opportunity to show and gain recognition for the work that they are doing. The results of the study will be used to inform the Youth Forum's future policy development work in the area of [education](#). Those who participate in the study will contribute to the identification of the added value of non-formal education in youth organisations. The survey is part of a research study that the Youth Forum is conducting in partnership with the University of Bath and GHK Consulting Ltd. Through the study, entitled: "The Impact of Non Formal Education in Youth Organisations on young people's employability", the Youth Forum hopes to explore how non-formal education helps young people to equip themselves with the skills and abilities to enter into employment. To take part in the survey, participants and former participants of youth organisations please [click here](#) and youth organisations please [click here](#).

### Cultural Values and Volunteering: A Cross-cultural Comparison of Students Motivation to Volunteer in 13 Countries

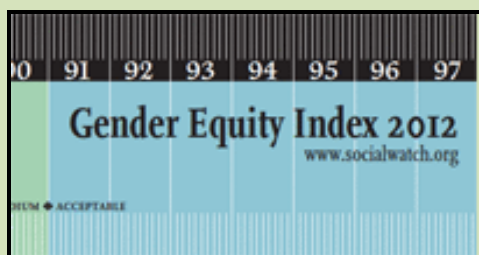


Voluntary participation is connected to cultural, political, religious and social contexts. Social and societal factors can provide opportunities, expectations and requirements for voluntary activity, as well as influence the values and norms promoting this.

This article questions how cultural values affect attitudes towards volunteerism, using data from an empirical research project on student volunteering activity in 13 countries in North America, Europe, the Middle East, and the Asia Pacific region. The findings indicate that there are differences in motivation between countries which represent different cultural values. This article sets these findings in context by comparing structural and cultural factors which may influence volunteerism within each country. [Read more](#)



## Gender Equity Index 2012 launched



The Gender Equity Index measures the gap between women and men in education, the economy and political empowerment. The 2012 index finds that the achievements made by women towards equity in education - with educational equality assessed by the index as low - are still very far from having an impact on their having a fair share in the economy - assessed as very low - or in political power - assessed as critical. [Read more](#) Source: [Social Watch](#).

## World Congress of NGOs, Nairobi, Kenya, 5 to 8 July 2012



Join NGO representatives from around the world, as well as prominent international and national leaders from the governmental, intergovernmental and for-profit sectors, for the 2012 World Congress of NGOs, to be held from 5 to 8 July in Nairobi, Kenya. Register by 5 May 2012 to receive a substantial discount.

Source: [World Congress of NGOs](#)

## Time for a new social contract CIVICUS report "State of Civil Society 2011"



CIVICUS is proud to present its inaugural report on the state of civil society. The report, State of Civil Society 2011 examines such key current areas for civil society as the rise of protest and dissent, the enabling and disabling environment for civil society, the role of civil society in response to crisis, the funding situation for civil society and civil society's role in the multilateral arena. The report suggests that civil society faces a generational opportunity to prove its value as a source of alternatives at a time of profound global crisis. The report further concludes that there is a need for new, more broad-based, inclusive coalitions and communities that take account of the diversity of civil society and the strengths of different parts of civil society, such as CSOs, community groups, online activists, the new protest movements, faith-based groups and trade unions.

[Continue reading...](#)

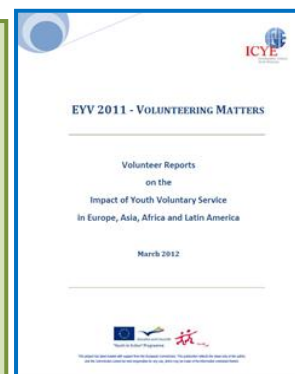
## ICYE PROGRAMME NEWS

### EYV 2011 - Volunteering Matters! 16 Volunteers Action-Research Country Reports

Impact assessment in international voluntary service has gradually become a priority area for ICYE as we need to understand not just how volunteering impacts on volunteers but also on the local community in order to improve our programmes and activities. This publication is a first step in this direction. It is the outcome of the EVS project "EYV 2011 - Volunteering Matters!" supported by the Youth in Action programme of the European Commission and implemented by the ICYE International Office in cooperation with its members and partners in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

This EVS project aimed to take stock, raise awareness and promote the benefits of volunteering programs and practices in the following countries: Austria, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana, Iceland, India, Kenya, Mexico, Philippines, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Tanzania, Turkey and Vietnam.

By contributing to the activities to mark the EYV 2011 and the IYV+10, this project was a unique opportunity for the participating organizations and volunteers to promote their contributions to social and human development at local, national and international levels and to make volunteering a worldwide-recognized and beneficial practice. The volunteers were based at the national offices of national and international voluntary service organisations. Besides participating in their daily activities and learning about how voluntary service is conducted in that particular society and cultural context, they were exposed to the work and experience of local organizations hosting international volunteers and carried out research and interviews with volunteers and hosts and carried out surveys about history, recognition and impact of volunteering in the respective host country. The reports can be viewed/downloaded [here](#).



## EVS project "Youth and Intergenerational Solidarity"



From September 2012 to May 2013 the ICYE International Office will coordinate a multilateral EVS project "Youth and Intergenerational Solidarity" that takes up the motto of the 2012 European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations by promoting intergenerational support and solidarity. Ageing populations present considerable challenges to existing infrastructure, welfare, health and pension financing, which in turn put a strain on relationships between generations. The existence of conflicts of views, interests and lifestyles between generations is well-known; the elder is oftentimes considered a burden and suffers loneliness and exclusion. Simultaneously, age coupled with aspects like social class, gender, disabilities, etc. compounds the problems of the elderly, creating an environment of inequality within which they -sometimes barely- survive. Enhancing the quality of life of the older generation implies working towards a holistic society that is just and equal, and sustainable across board for all generations.

This reciprocal 9-month volunteer project will enable 16 accordingly, projects include an intergenerational community development centre (UK), homes for disabled adults and elders (Austria, Spain), homes for elders (Italy, Iceland, India, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya), homes for disabled elders (Poland, South Africa), veteran's hospital (Russia), and support centres for the elderly (Mexico, Colombia, Morocco). The volunteers in this project will be the bridges between generations - raising awareness, stimulating debate, fighting exclusion and having a real impact on the lives of people.

## 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference- Volunteering, Social Capital and Human Development



ICYE Colombia participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> conference on Volunteering, Social Capital and Human Development, organized by YMCA Colombia with the support of the United Nations and IAVE-International Association for Volunteer Effort. The conference took place on 24-25 May 2012, in Bogotá, Colombia, and was attended by volunteering leaders, volunteering organizations and international participants from 10 different countries.

The conference gathered the most active organizations involved in the volunteering field in Colombia. During these two days, both in central conferences and 8 different panels, participants had the chance to reflect and discuss about the involvement of society in tackling sustainable development challenges, and promoting volunteering as a means to achieve this aim. The debate focused on the best ways to foster and increase the contributions of volunteering in human development activities, in which young people, private companies, universities and volunteers become the main stakeholders of the transformation of our social reality and its sustainability. The ICYE Colombia representatives made presentations in the panels: "Youth Entrepreneurship & Social Transformation" and "University volunteering can make the difference"

## UNITED Conference in Turkey: Where Do We Stand? A Map For Human Rights



As a current volunteer at the International Office of ICYE, I had the honour to participate in a conference by UNITED for Intercultural Action, a European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees, held from May 22 – 27, 2012 in Sile, a small Turkish town at the Black Sea. It was my first professional conference ever. This is also why I was curious and excited about how it would be.

What I found impressive was the entire concept, how the conference was set up. Although we were a huge group comprising about 100 people, we came together at the formal meetings in plenary and also at the less formal more interactive sessions in the form of working groups and workshops. After the initial presentations on the situation of human rights in this conference-hosting country, Turkey, the subsequent days dealt with strategies to fight hate crimes or tackle Islamophobia.

Thanks to the informal atmosphere in the working groups we had more space for discussions. I was part of the group "Last Exit: Accessing Fortress Europe", in which participants shared personal and professional experiences working with asylum seekers and refugees. We also discussed the diverse problems and varying situations of refugees and asylum seekers in different European countries. On the last day, the six working groups came together in plenary to share some points of discussion, which were presented in the form of short theatrical sketches.

Last but not least, one of the most interesting parts of the conference was the excursion to local non-governmental organisations. It was such a pity that the excursions were arranged all at the same time so each participant could visit just one organisation. I decided to visit the editorial office of the bilingual Turkish-Armenian newspaper AGOS, where local journalists talked about the freedom of the press in Turkey. They explained how the assassination in 2007 of Hrant Dink, the former editor-in-chief of AGOS and an advocate of Turkish-Armenian reconciliation and human rights in Turkey, led to a change in the law and thus contributed to greater freedom of local press.

This conference has not only added to my previous experience - I have interned at the Centre for Integration of Foreigners and tutored asylum seekers living in the Czech Republic - it has also generated greater interest and motivation in me to promote human rights and challenge not only the hate, but importantly also the apathy and indifference in people. For more information please go to: <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/pages/kern.htm>

*Linda Kralova, EVS Czech volunteer in Germany*

## ICYE Japan Reunion and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party



On Saturday, 7 April 2012, ICYE Japan proudly celebrated its 50th Anniversary with a reunion party attended by current and former ICYE exchangees. As the photo shows it was a lively and well attended event, which offered a great opportunity to meet old good ICYE friends.

## ICYE FEDERATION STAFF NEWS

### New ICYE National Correspondents

- Ecuador - Belén MORA (Ms)