

Worlds of experience



No. 30 (February 2013)

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'Youth in Action' Programme

'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,

2012 was designated the "European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations" by the European Commission. Enhancing the quality of life of the older generation implies working towards a holistic society that is fair, just and equal, and sustainable across board for all generations. In this 30th edition of the ICYE newsletter entitled "Working towards intergenerational solidarity", we take up the motto: "Everyone has a role to play!"

Sixteen young volunteers participating in the 2012-13 ICYE EVS project "Youth and Intergenerational Solidarity" have been contributing to the development of a society for all ages by working in intergenerational community development projects or those addressing the elderly in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. In Volunteers Voices, six of them describe how they close the gap between generations and contribute to local efforts aimed at improving living conditions and life options of the ageing generation. In the UK, an Indian volunteer describes her work at Freshwinds and how it has inspired and motivated her, as well as providing her valuable work experience. A Swedish volunteer in Honduras tells us he is surprised and touched by the tender care and time spent by the staff with the elderly residents of "Hilos de Plata". In Poland, a Colombian volunteer narrates her experiences at "Pomocna Dłoń" as magical and says that the elderly are 'different' possibly because "they don't lose their sense of wonder". In Morocco, a Danish volunteer explains that the elderly at her project are at once crazier and more ordinary than she had ever expected, and that the non-verbal moments are the best – all one needs to do is join in the dance. Also in the UK, an Indonesian volunteer reveals that she has learnt how support workers help to improve the quality of life of refugees, which has helped her understand how, for example, age, immigration status, gender can add different layers of discrimination onto the lives of people, one not distinguishable from another. A Spanish volunteer in Colombia divulges that the exchange and discussions with the elderly about life in Colombia or the culture and customs of Spain, the role of religion or women in different periods of life – are what she likes best! This exchange, this mutual gaining of knowledge, of sensitivity is what bridges the distance between generations.

News from International Organisations feature, among others: Videos by young people on Decent Work; "Your action counts" – People around the world celebrate International Volunteer Day; ICPD Global Youth Forum Declaration; "Compass - Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People" by the CoE; and the global photo contest "WORK4YOUTH" launched by ILO.

News from NGOs report on: "Asian and African youth state their demands for post-2015 development"; Amnesty International launches a "New interactive human rights education tool for youth"; "Asian and African youth state their demands for post-2015 development"; and "Human Rights Watch World Report 2013".

ICYE Programme News include: ICYE Taiwan 20th Anniversary's celebration; The Asia-Pacific Region seminar "InterACTs"; report from the UNITED conference "Wake up Europe: It's Time to Act"; BVBP/ICYE Peru 30th anniversary's celebrations; International Volunteer Day in Poland by SPW; and a report from the UNITED Study Session on "Against Racist Propaganda: Be Active and Hate Speech Online".

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 "Migrating Identities" and to be published at the end of June 2013.

Please send your contributions to icye@icye.org, before May 31th, 2013.

Warmest regards!

ICYE International Office

This and previous issues of "Worlds of Experience" can be viewed and downloaded from: www.icye.org

"Youth and Intergenerational Solidarity"

VOLUNTEERS VOICES

"Champions of the Community"

I am Sneha, a European Voluntary Service Volunteer from Bangalore, India. I have been at Freshwinds, a charity in Birmingham, UK, for the past 4 months of my 9 months volunteering abroad. I have had so many wonderful experiences in the short while I've been here but I have decided to stick to the 2 most interesting events in my 4 months at Freshwinds.

At Freshwinds, I volunteer with Integrated Medicine. They offer a wide range of services to adults and children. These services are free of charge and, depending on the type of programme, accessible in-house or within the community. Client services primarily include the provision of complementary therapies to adults and children with life threatening and life limiting conditions. Supporting these are research activities and a number of Public Health initiatives such as Community Health Champions, TB Awareness programme, etc.

I have been involved with The Community Health Champions. These are a group of dedicated people who after training and with support become Community Health Champions. They voluntarily bring their ability to relate to people and their own life experience to transform health and well-being in their local communities. Within their families, communities and workplaces, they empower and motivate people to get involved in healthy social activities, create groups to meet local needs and sign-post people to relevant support and services. Community Health Champions help others to enjoy healthier lives by raising awareness of health and healthy choices, sharing health messages, removing barriers and creating supportive networks and environments. My role was to organize Community Health Champion events in Birmingham. It was a challenging task but all the hard work paid off when my team won the 'Most Successful Community Health Champion event' award for the year 2012. I was inspired by my knowledgeable group to become a Community Health Champion myself. Without wasting any time I enrolled and successfully completed a nationally recognized qualification from the Royal Society for Public Health, level I. I will be attending level II later this month. I enjoy having to plan these events and look forward to plan more of them in the future and help tackle health and wellbeing issues across Birmingham. So that's the first.



The second most striking experience here in the UK was on the 1st of December, Freshwinds attended an evening event at mac, Birmingham in Cannon Hill Park to mark World AIDS Day, the international day of remembrance to commemorate the lives of those lost to HIV and AIDS. The theme in Birmingham this year was 'Make your Mark' - they encouraged people to think about what World AIDS means to them in 2012. The event was particularly special for Freshwinds staff as we saw our CEO, Mohammed Al-Rahim, receive an award for HIV Sector Outstanding Contribution. We were invited to get involved by creating personalised patches to be joined together as a quilt for display. I decided to go with "there is hope" and that "the world has to overcome the stigma there is to being HIV positive". I also threw in "me being in England for World Aids Day 2012". I am enjoying my time here in the UK - from turning 21 to surviving 2012 and proving the Mayans wrong. Volunteering as an EVS volunteer at Freshwinds has been a wonderful way to stay connected to healthy living in society and learn about promoting social health as a member of a community addressing different generations. Being at Freshwinds I am not only inspired, but also motivated and encouraged while gaining work experience.

Sneha Raja, Indian EVS volunteer in the UK

"Small measures creating miracles"

I have now been here in Latin America for almost five months and I feel that I am finally used to the Spanish language and the culture, and I am actually even right at home with it.

My name is Daniel Gustavsson, I'm a Swedish volunteer in Honduras and I'm a part of the EVS project "Youth and Intergenerational Solidarity". My project is in a nursing home in the capital, Tegucigalpa, a city that is in constant movement and renovation, built on hills and valleys.

My project "Hilos de Plata" is one of the few homes of its kind in Honduras. The center is run as a non-profit organization and has the capacity to receive twenty-five seniors. At "Hilos de Plata" we rehabilitate people who ended up on the fringes of society and who were homeless before they came to us. Together with the other employees and the center's pastor, I assist in the daily tasks of providing care, help with feeding, hold discussion groups and organize activities. Each day is filled with both joy and sorrow.

Initially, when my Spanish was still weak, I did not understand much. But one becomes creative when the language does not yet function. With facial expressions, hands, arms and legs, you can make yourself more than understood. In daily conversations with the elderly, I hear life stories that are often filled with sadness and longing, but they are all tied together by a belief in a better future for coming generations. Honduras is one of the western hemisphere's poorest countries; it is

reflected in the criminality and the corruption. Many people I meet, not only the elder but also the younger generation are dreaming of a better future.



Due to poverty, the priority is not the older generations. They are usually seen as a burden to society and if you are without a family that can care for you, you do not have many routes to choose from, other than a life on the streets. The few centers that "Hilos de Plata" operates survive on donations from churches and individuals. Without the enthusiasts who help financially, this work with the seniors would not be possible.

An important role I have in my project is to assist with fundraising activities and communicate "Hilos de Platas" existence to the public. I have had the privilege to take a course in how to work on this in Honduras, and it has helped me get started with my work. It is a long process and I wish and hope that there will be positive outcomes in the near future.

Working here at "Hilos de Plata", I'm surprised at the tremendous care with which the assistants work with and look after the elderly; it is not just a nine-to-five job. Here, the assistants have the time to listen, to laugh together, to give love and to be available to the seniors at all times. Actually, I should not be surprised. That's how it should be! When I look at the work and care for the older generations back home in Sweden and how you count the minutes and barely have time to talk, I get upset. But I am also hopeful as I know that I will take with me the attitude I received from Honduras – that nothing is impossible and that change is possible, as well as my reason for being here – to teach and to be taught. I will take with me to Sweden that even small measures can make great miracles!

*Daniel Gustavsson
Swedish EVS volunteer in Honduras*

"They don't lose their sense of wonder"

Almost 4 months ago I was sitting in a plane on my way to Warsaw, Poland. I was a bit afraid to go so far from home, to a country with a language that I didn't know at all, where I didn't know anybody... I thought that maybe it wasn't the best idea of my life...

I am a Colombian volunteer working at Pomocna Dlon, a foundation where 30 intellectually disabled people between 40-60 years old live. My day starts with helping to bring them tea at breakfast at 9:00. After that I am with them in music or art-therapy,

theater, dance, gymnastic or whatever activities that they are doing during the morning. At 14.00 it is lunch time and I help to set the table, and after lunch, we go for a walk. We also have some additional activities like going to the swimming pool, going bowling and visit museums. In my free time, I go out with the other volunteers, meet new people and travel around Poland. Everything while I TRY to learn polish.

But behind this schematic information about my life as a volunteer, the most important thing is this adventure and really getting to know and sharing my life with these people. Today, we live in a world where it is not easy to be old, or to be different. These two aspects separate you completely from the "modern world". Concepts and stereotypes about beauty used for publicity and in television and most of all the system of capitalism aims to tell you and to make your main objective in life: "Never get to be old". That's because if you are old you are not productive. Now can you imagine what it means be "old" and have some kind of disability that makes you "different"?

With this experience I learn that the only things that get older are the flesh, bones, hair. Those kinds of things can be old but all of us are in the process of growing up every day of our lives: with each mistake and failure, with each good thing that we do, with each project, each dream that we achieve, and each person that we love. And for sure a person, who has lived more days, days of making mistakes, loving and falling down, has so many things to teach us.



In this magical experience at Pomocna Dlon, the people I work with teach me things every single day, when they laugh, when they say thank you, when they enjoy each second in my company, when they hug me. They teach me that the most important day is TODAY, to appreciate each moment of my life like it was the last one. It doesn't matter how many professional titles you have, which country you are from, how old you are, how smart you are or your physical beauty, if you cannot laugh, discover the world every day, love like a "child", be patient, know how to listen like an "old man", take risks and overcome fear like an adolescent. Maybe, what makes them "different" is that THEY DON'T LOSE THE SENSE OF WONDER.

Now I know that missing my family and friends, my language, Colombian food, and being one year behind in my studies is all worth it. I have so many ways to walk yet! DZIĘKUJĘ BARDZO for this opportunity ICYE.!

*Claudia Patricia Chona Parra
Colombian EVS volunteer in Poland*

"Joining the dance"

When people say that on turning a certain age the human being starts going back into childhood, it does not come out of thin air. That is what I have realized after four months of taking care of the elderly. In these four months, I have been working with elderly people in a small, provincial city in the Southern part of Morocco through the EVS-project "Youth and Intergenerational Solidarity". It is both a totally different culture and a totally different set for me, a 20-year-old girl, who has so far spent most of her life studying in a safe and secure country like Denmark and always with her peers.

When I decided to go abroad to take care of the elderly, it was intentional. Working with elderly people seemed like a calm way to spend my gap year in a foreign country. The older generations have always had an aura of wisdom and life experience, which has seemed attractive to a stripling like me. I imagined how they would tell me amazing stories about their long, unusual lives. Along the way, I discovered though that taking care of the elderly is sometimes like taking care of children. With that point I mean both the small, cosy tasks like giving baths and feeding them with a spoon, as well as the larger ones where I have to be the grown-up and separate them when they are fighting over the ownership of a certain cardigan or whether the light should be switched on or off. In these moments, their former lives seem so distant even though you know that it has definitely marked them and made them into the personalities they are today. Do not get me wrong, in one way they differ a lot from children; they have all lived long lives in which a lot was not easy.



The elderly are at once crazier and more ordinary than I had ever expected – and for this simple warmth and craziness, I adore them. I adore when they smile and laugh, when they yell and fight and when we sing, dance and drum together. The first time an old lady called me "my girl, my girl", my heart melted – even if she was yelling at me and calling me ugly 10 minutes later when I tried to give her the daily medication. When the woman with Alzheimer remembered my face for the first time, it saved my day – even if she still does not remember my name. There is no doubt that these people have already won a big part of my heart. When I came here, it was not that easy though. The languages here are Arabic and Tamazirt; languages that I have never been in contact with before. However, in this case, it turned out to be my good fortune that these people rise above all normality. Together with smiles and laughs, dancing and making music ended up being our communication along with a well-developed body language. As soon as you give over to this

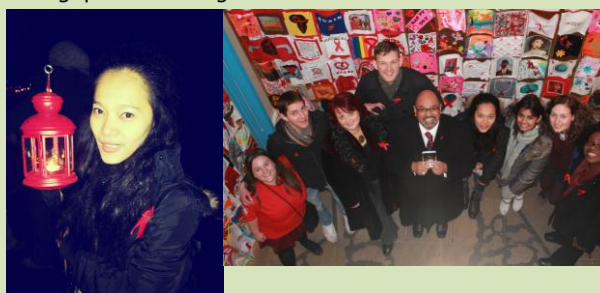
craziness, language difficulties have less importance. And even if my Arabic is now substantially better than it was then, the non-speaking moments are still some of my favourite ones. Because in the same way as with children, you do not always have to speak much, you just have to join in the dance.

Sofie Nørgaard, Danish EVS volunteer in Morocco

"Young and Old Solidarity"

My name is Shella (Indonesia) and I am volunteering at Freshwinds in Birmingham, United Kingdom. Freshwinds is a charity organization which offers care, support and services including the provision of integrated complementary therapy and advocacy to the HIV community, refugees, etc. For the first month, I was asked to make a presentation about the 'Java Island' where I am from, and I presented it in front of the Freshwinds staff. It was a bit challenging for me to do the presentation, as I always feel nervous to speak in front of many people.

When I was placed in the 'Supporting People' office, I joined the Refugee and HIV team. The team consisted of young and old staff members, but the age gap was not noticeable. We supported each other, and I was happy that they did not get tired of answering any questions I asked and helped me when I got stuck with certain tasks. I was involved in several tasks such as working on database audit, making client reports and filling the audit form. I feel glad working with them, and I like accompanying the support workers when they visit their clients. It is interesting since I met different clients with different issues, ages, problems and nationalities. This has helped me to understand how, for example, clients do not just hold a refugee status but are also of a particular age, gender, nationality, etc. which all influence their experience of discrimination. From all of these experiences, I am learning how the rules work in this country, how the support workers work, and how intergenerational solidarity can do away with the gap between ages.



As a young volunteer working at Freshwinds with older adults, I have realised that being old does not mean that they must stop working and gaining new experiences. I have realised that they are even more enthusiastic to work and contribute in the office. My working experience is that it is very important to respect each other for better cooperation and to the benefit of both the young and old generation.

*Yeyisha Shellayukti,
Indonesian EVS volunteer in the UK*

"Smiles and Tears"

The first feeling I had when I knew I was going to work in this project was a mixture of fear and curiosity. It was the first time I was to work with the elderly and people living in poverty.

Before I arrived in Colombia from Spain, I reviewed websites about activities and exercises for elderly people, so I came to the "Manos Amigas por el Anciano" Foundation full of ideas. However, I realized that these activities were not designed for this group of elders, and many of them left the foundation after breakfast. They are people who spend their days on the street, who are not used to following a certain timetable, who do not understand the exercises, some of them can't read, etc. So I had to quickly think of activities that were of interest to them like singing songs, reciting poetry and playing different games.



Sometimes it's difficult to perform activities because the foundation does not have much material and financial resources, so it's necessary to look for collaboration with other people and organisations, but this is not easy. This is why the foundation has a solidarity market where second hand clothes, shoes, books, etc. are sold. When it comes to the elderly that I work with, I prefer to treat them with respect, rather than to treat them with



mercy and compassion. They are poor, but they have dignity, so I treat them the way I would treat any other person. It is very important that they maintain a high self-esteem, so I do things like painting the ladies' nails, so that they feel pretty.

Sometimes it's very hard for me to listen to and get to know the reality of their lives. There are some stories that break my heart, like a lady whose little daughter was taken by Social Services and she has carried a doll for years, thinking it's her daughter. There is another lady with a lot of hematomas on her body because she's been beaten by her own son. There is also a very old man who limps a lot and begs at traffic lights. What I like most is talking with them about the life in Colombia, knowing their opinion on different topics, telling each other stories or talking about the culture or customs of Spain. Sometimes we discuss the role of religion or women in different periods of life, establishing an interesting reciprocity. To conclude: this project has been a great experience for me, making me laugh and cry, and above all, giving me a lot of knowledge and sensitivity.



Laura Plaza Muñoz, Spanish EVS volunteer in Colombia

More on "Youth and Intergenerational Solidarity"

Volonteurope report on the contribution of volunteering to the EY2012

Volonteurope has a publication that highlights the contribution volunteering and civic engagement make in promoting active ageing and solidarity between generations. The report includes several policy recommendations and examples of good practices, including a specific section on lifelong learning to which EUCIS-LLL contributed.

[Read more.](#)

News from International Organizations

Videos by young people on Decent Work

Young people deserve a chance to access decent work. Their voices should be heard, their creativity engaged, and their rights respected. As a result of the video contest "Decent work for youth" launched in March 2012, by the ILO Youth Employment Programme, over 200 extraordinary videos were received with employment-related stories of young people from different parts of the world. These videos were included in a global database that is now available online. Videos can be searched by language, country and a wide array of youth employment topics, including conditions of work, informality, unemployment, job search, internships and migration. Watch the stories of young people by searching videos [here](#).



"Your action counts" – People around the world celebrate International Volunteer Day

From Ecuador to Haiti, Liberia to Bosnia, Jordan to Vietnam, all around the world people celebrated International Volunteer Day (IVD) on 5 December 2012, through a variety of events including parades, campaigns, conferences, competitions, blood donation drives, and coordinated volunteer actions.

[Read more.](#)



ICPD Global Youth Forum Declaration



The ICPD Global Youth Forum has produced a set of recommendations which outline the vision of young people around the world for their future. The conference was held in Bali, Indonesia, from 4-6 December 2012 in the context of the review and follow up to the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 in order to produce recommended actions for the outcome report of the review and for the post-2015 United Nations development agenda, as well as to generate a new consensus on putting youth rights at the heart of development.

[Read more.](#)

Web platform launched for youth participation in the preparation of the 2013 World Youth Report



The United Nations Focal Point on Youth has enabled a web platform so young people may contribute to the 2013 [World Youth Report](#) through an interactive process of consultations, where they can share their perspectives on "Youth and Migration". The report will offer a multidimensional outlook on the concerns, challenges and successes experienced by young migrants and other young people affected by migration, including second generation migrants, return migrants, and young people left behind by migrant parents. You can also join the conversation on our social media platforms:

- Follow us on Twitter: @UN4Youth
- Follow the conversation using hashtag: #youthmigration
- Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UNyouthyear>

Compass - Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People

The Council of Europe published an updated version of "COMPASS", a manual that provides youth leaders, teachers and facilitators of human rights education activities, whether professional or volunteers, with concrete ideas and practical activities to engage young people in acting for human rights. COMPASS is now available in more than 30 languages and has also a version specifically designed for human rights education with children – COMPASITO.

[Read more.](#)



MY World



MY World is a global survey, initiated by the United Nations and partners, asking young people to choose their priorities for a better world. Results of the surveys will be shared with world leaders in setting the next global development agenda.

[Read more.](#)

ILO launches global photo contest "WORK4YOUTH"



The ILO Youth Employment Programme is organizing a photo contest to shed light on youth employment issues, the challenges young people face in the workplace as well as their power to overcome them. The contest is part of the activities of the Work4Youth. ILO welcomes photographs from amateur as well as professional photographers in the contest. The photographs submitted should capture *youth at work* (in different places and under various conditions) in a creative and original manner. Photographers are invited to focus specifically on working conditions, gender barriers, discrimination, informality, entrepreneurship, working poverty, migration, precarious work, and the rural economy, among others. A total of five prizes to be won! Participants are invited to submit up to a maximum of five photos by no later than **15 April 2013**. For details on how to participate, please visit www.ilo.org/w4y

News from NGOs

Asian and African youth state their demands for post-2015 development



At two recent events - the African Youth Conference in Nairobi, and the North-East Asian Youth Conference in Seoul - youth organizations came together to state their demands for the post-2015 development agenda. Additionally, the UN Secretary-General has appointed Ahmad Alhindawi of Jordan as his Envoy on Youth. More information on the conferences and on the Youth Envoy is available [online](#).

Amnesty International launches a new interactive human rights education tool for youth



An innovative digital tool launched by Amnesty International that can support your organization's valuable work to advance human rights. RespectMyRights is an online platform that aims to engage and inspire young people between the ages of 15-22 to learn about and take action against human rights violations and abuses that deepen and drive poverty. [Read more.](#)

Youth Ag-Summit



Through the Feeding a Hungry Planet – Youth Ag-Summit, we hope to attract, inspire and support youth to make a difference. Apply, send your perspective, and you may be selected to represent your country as a delegate, expenses paid. [Read more.](#)

Human Rights Watch World Report 2013



This 23rd annual World Report summarizes human rights conditions in more than 90 countries and territories worldwide in 2012. It reflects extensive investigative work that Human Rights Watch staff has undertaken during the year, often in close partnership with domestic human rights activists. [Read more.](#)

ICYE PROGRAMME NEWS

ICYE Taiwan celebrates its 20th Anniversary

In November 2012, ICYE Taiwan celebrated 20 years of coming into existence. The anniversary celebrations consisted of a series of events: An all-day "Asia Pacific Regional Volunteers Development & Culture Exchange Workshop" for young Taiwanese at the City Hall in Tainan. The afternoon session had representatives attending the ICYE Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop sharing views and experiences about international volunteering and describing ICYE's activities in the different Asia-Pacific countries to Taiwanese students. The second part of these celebrations involved an outdoor event organised in cooperation with the Tainan Community University and aiming at the promotion of ICYE's volunteering programmes and activities. Country booths were decorated with posters, national flags, cultural items, etc. to draw attention and interact with the public. The anniversary celebrations culminated with current and former volunteers, host families, host projects and Asia-Pacific workshop participants – all attending the 20th anniversary party that comprised performances by volunteers, games, and a video collage of current and former ICYE volunteers going as far back as twenty years.



The Asia-Pacific Region InterACTs

The ICYE Federation Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop, aimed at sharing best practice in programme development, management and training, took place in Tainan City, Taiwan, from November 6 – 10, 2012. Representatives of ICYE member and partner organisations in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, New Zealand, India, Nepal, Indonesia, Vietnam and The Philippines discussed and negotiated the ICYE STEPs programme, South to South exchanges, and developed bi-country programmes for long-term volunteering, for example, for India and Nepal, and Indonesia and the Philippines. Participants presented the new initiatives they were developing in their respective countries to generate interest and jointly cooperate on these programmes with ICYE organisations in the region. One of the final sessions included the presentation of the organisations' structure and system to pinpoint the challenges they face and concluded with the sharing of best practice to help address identified challenges. The workshop ended with participants presenting work plans for their respective organisations.



Tools for combating racism and discrimination – Experiences from the UNITED conference "Wake up Europe: It's Time to Act"

From 12 to 17 November 2012, over a hundred people from about thirty different countries gathered together in the tiny town of Raasepori - for six days this was the epicentre of the European anti-racist movement. "Wake up Europe: It's Time to Act" was a conference organised by UNITED for Intercultural Action, for the first time in Finland. From the very first moment I arrived, it was clear that UNITED is not merely a network of organisation - the six capital letters stand for people.



The conference was interesting and varied both in terms of programme and participants. A range of topics such as online activism and rights of undocumented migrants were discussed and debated – all in the spirit of “taking action”! Civil servants and researchers gave their input in the plenary sessions. Artists and online activists shared their best tools in workshops. And each participant’s knowhow was put to work in the working groups; as was mine in the group working under the title of “Power to the Youth – Volunteering in NGOs”.

The situation of volunteering and the opportunities of young people vary greatly from one country to another. The same applies to the issue of racism and discrimination, as Geert Ates, the director of

UNITED, reminded us in the opening speech. Although comparisons easily lead to hasty assumptions, they may also provide eye-openers. During the conference I myself realised just how easy it is to take part in actions promoting intercultural understanding and condemning racism in Finland - so easy that you don’t have to think about it. These realisations occurred thanks to the participants who shared their experiences of working in extremely difficult circumstances; where taking action means taking a considerable risk.

In the news you often read about the injustice, but less often about the people who struggle against it. These efforts deserve much more attention. Making noise and condemning the unacceptable is also one way of fighting the attitudes and practices that still deprive people of their dignity far too often.

‘Intercultural learning’ is generally considered to be at the core of international volunteering, while ‘anti-racism’ and ‘anti-discrimination’ are treated as distant cousins. But are they really that far off?

At the conference Rainer Hiltunen, minority ombudsman in Finland, stressed that we should not be content with mantra of “it’s important that we are diverse”. According to Hiltunen, the actual, prevailing differences are in fact often ignored; more attention should be paid to the way we encounter difference – to how we react to it.

This learning process, related to recognising and acknowledging both the similarities and differences between us, is what I consider to be at the very core of intercultural learning. Then what else can anti-racism and anti-discrimination be if not putting the lesson into practice?

I left the conference with a big bunch of new and inspiring ideas. But what about the acts? Time will tell whether they are big or small. No big common agenda resulted from the conference – which was not even the point of it - but a lot of new skills, tools and contacts. Action is what you make it up to be.

Hanna Rajala, Board Member of Maailmanvaihto/ICYE Finland and representative of the ICYE Federation at the conference



ICYE Peru celebrates 30th anniversary

Brigada de Voluntarios Bolivarianos del Peru (BVBP), a member of ICYE Federation since 2011, was founded on November 23, 1982. From 21 to 25 November 2012 BVBP celebrated its 30th Anniversary, with a program filled with festive activities. The main ceremony was held on November 22 and was attended by representatives of like-minded NGOs, politicians, and diplomats. During these celebrations, BVBP held also its 15th National Congress.



International Volunteer Day in SPW

As every year, Stowarzyszenie Promocji Wolontariatu celebrated on 5th December 2012 the International Volunteer Day together with the seven EVS (female) volunteers from Armenia, Colombia, Germany, Moldova and Spain that SPW is hosting this year, who produced photo stories about their voluntary experience. The day started with a photo workshop presenting history and basic rules of photography. After this short and practical lesson, the volunteers divided in 3 groups worked out scripts of their stories and went out to cover their ideas with pictures. Despite the gloomy, autumn weather, the girls were in very good mood and had a lot of energy. Their experience as foreign volunteers in Poland and the role of SPW (presented by Mr. Hedgehog) in their projects were presented. More information about the IVD 2012 and other activities of SPW on our blog: <http://siedzisiebiez.blogspot.com>



Dorota Braziewicz, Project Coordinator - SPW



The importance of non-formal education to combat hate speech on line

Despite progress made, coexistence in Europe and many countries around of the world nowadays is still affected by intolerance and racist views of ethnic and cultural diversity. "Hate speech" is the most tangible expression of such intolerance.

Discriminative content on the Web, or "hate sites" devoted to proselytism or propaganda for radical groups have become popular with cartoons, images, jokes and content that can be spread easily. According to the survey "[EU kids on line](#)" one in five 15 or 16 year olds in Europe have claimed to have seen hate sites in 2010. The population under 25 years in the most affected.

Aggressive nationalism, ethnocentrism and discrimination against minorities or migrants expressed through an image, a graffiti or "viral" texts or photographs in social networks, blogs or newspapers are the most common expressions of Hate speech online more and more popular nowadays.

Believing in the importance and relevance of non-formal education to address this problem, UNITED (*European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees*) organized the Study Session "*Against Racist Propaganda: Be Active and Hate Speech Online*" that was held on 9-15 December at European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, France. I took part in this event as representative of the ICYE International Office, which was attended by representatives of 38 organizations active in the field of human rights education, with the aim of searching together alternatives and innovative actions to fight hate speech online.

The most challenging task of combating hate speech online was to come up with a strategy that tackles and counters the proliferation of hate content on line, having no experience or knowledge about individual's behavior in online communities. Because of the enormous diversity of material available on the Internet, which lends itself to light and incidental thinking about social issues, young users can simply log on and discover inaccurate information. Online, one's perspective on society many at times is distorted.



Education: Key strategy

Cultural and social phenomena, always dynamic, probe continuously in a wise dialectic that government and educations institutions still have a long way to go to warrant individual rights in new forms of social interaction, which pose new challenges and demands new approaches. Legislation (permissive or restrictive) alone is not enough. To be effective and successful, public and institutional efforts must be accompanied by educational and learning opportunities that stimulate and sustain an ethical and moral approach to ensure mutual respect, solidarity and co-responsibility in the use of online spaces / social media.

I contributed trying to share a little of the long-standing experience that ICYE has in fostering youth development through voluntary work and cultural exchange. Youngsters that, like me, are living in a different culture, have learnt quickly to value and respect difference, co-exist with others, while conserving one's own identity.

Since there are very few obstacles to setting up a website, or posting on a message board, all voices appear equal. In Internet often one cannot distinguish between mainstream and extreme opinions, which are usually due to lack of knowledge and fear of the other (cultures and religions).

Non formal education programs, such as youth exchanges and voluntary service are very effective means to shape youngsters into active, understanding and tolerant citizens. Through cultural exchange, people establish new relations and learn that mutual understanding and respect, participation and conflict resolution can only be achieved through dialogue.

As a result of the session the participants presented a series of viral videos that are now part of the campaign antidiscrimination led by UNITED for the European countries. [Find out more.](#)



Author and photographer: Juan Sebastian Gomez Lopez, Colombian volunteer at the ICYE I.O.

ICYE FEDERATION STAFF NEWS

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- Mexico - Imelda ROMERO RODRÍGUEZ (Ms)
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