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



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.'

"Volunteering for Community Cohesion"

Dear Friends,

Volunteering is one of the main channels for people to engage in the enhancement of their communities and their own well-being. Although the recognition of volunteering has grown over the past years, it is still undervalued and the strong links between volunteer activity and diversity, equality and peace are often overlooked.

In the 37th issue of the ICYE newsletter, we thus focus on "Volunteering for Community Cohesion", that is how volunteering impacts on building social capital and reducing social exclusion. Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General stated in December 2009: Volunteerism is a source of community strength, resilience, solidarity and social cohesion. It can bring positive social change by fostering respect for diversity, equality and the participation of all. It is among society's most vital assets.

The value systems underpinning volunteering promote norms of reciprocity, solidarity and trust. So how does volunteering bridge the intercultural divide in everyday life and foster respect for diversity, equality and inclusion? In Volunteers Voices eight young people volunteering worldwide with ICYE tell us how they see it. A Mexican volunteer in Finland describes it as an expression of the human relationship in trying to develop or create change. A Swiss volunteer in Honduras tells how volunteering puts life into perspective and the work with the children in her project is the best lesson she has learnt. A Mexican in Germany suggests that volunteering abroad can help you to make a difference as it offers a different perspective and ideas to live together peacefully. A Ghanaian volunteer in Switzerland sees it as a vehicle for social change – changing mind sets and making us appreciate different cultures and value systems. A Spanish volunteer in Germany tell us that what stays with you is the joy of giving, and a German volunteer in Colombia shares that she learnt to treat all people with respect. A US-American volunteer in Kenya sees volunteering as a vehicle for exposure, creating flexibility to accept cultural differences. Last but not least, a Colombian volunteer in Germany invites us to start a revolution of small efforts that create a nicer, more cohesive present and future for us all.

News from International Organisations, amongst others, feature: The State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2015; the Youth Effect on Gender Balance in education; the European Youth Monitor launched by the European Commission.

News from NGOs report on: Global Day of Citizen Action; NGOs: bridging the North South divide; The handbook: Activating the Potential of Diversity in Trainings; a Youth-run Environment movement: Green the Gene.

ICYE Programme News include: the Project and Capacity Building Training for Human Right Education Multipliers; the Peace and Love festival and work camp; the Kick-off meeting and training course for youth leaders.

Wishing you an interesting reading, we would like to encourage readers to send us articles and pictures for the next issue of "Worlds of Experience", dedicated to "Communicating Human Rights in Diversity". Please send your contributions to icye@icye.org, before 30 September 2015.

Warmest regards!
ICYE International Office

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

“Volunteering for Community Cohesion”

VOLUNTEERS VOICES

Thinking Out Loud

The world has not understood the value of cohesion yet, maybe partly because there is no agreed definition for cohesion. Some people say that you find cohesion in a place where people create and share a vision but some disagree arguing that shared things are not for everyone; it's almost surreal to get to this goal because of the contrasts. What I know is that cohesion in a community will have some differences always.



My name is Jorge Miguel Lara Pino. I am a Mexican twenty year old guy. My desire of adventure, travelling, helping, knowing and sharing brought me to Finland as a volunteer worker. My work is located in Nakkila, a municipality in the west of Finland, part of the Satakunta region. It is a really small town, around 5,800 people live here. I worked in a primary school called Kirkonseudun Koulu as an assistant teacher. There I had the chance to share my culture with the kids and learn all the characteristics that a culture implies; it is an exchange of language, ideas, way of living, daily life, traditions. I am very glad and satisfied to have been part of this project. It helped me a lot to grow as a person because this exchange gives you a different perspective of how you see the world, and also because it was the proper environment to develop my main task as a volunteer.

Arriving here was a contrast for me and for the people in town. In these kinds of small places it is weird to see foreign people. In the beginning it is always hard to fit into the community, people see you weirdly and don't include you at all. When I arrived the kids at school were only staring at me, they were so curious, but it's understandable because I am so different from what they usually see in their daily activities. But I think with the passing of time and some effort this has changed. Fortunately I had the support of the teachers and host family to create a social net and a different vision of me. I was active trying to make some new activities with the kids, letting them know me and creating cohesion in the school; the result was successful.

As a volunteer you always want to experience everything and try to break any barrier that will appear in your way, so I decided to go further. My main goal was to try to get the acceptance of the whole community and let them be part of this intercultural exchange. Having this in mind, I started talking with my mentor and support person about starting a football club after school. We were with a group of twenty kids around a month and a half so I think this helped a lot. My host parents got to know me better and have more confidence and trust in me; that uncertainty and mystery of me is almost gone.



Volunteerism is an expression of the human relationship. It is about participation in trying to develop or help to change. With all our values we try to contribute as much as possible to people and their societies. Our cultures need to develop cohesion because it is the most pure way to fix this crazy world.

Jorge Lara, Mexico (volunteer in Finland)

A Life Lesson

My name is Julie. I am from Switzerland and I am 19. Five months ago, I left chocolate, cheese, winter, and security for mangos, beans, summer and adventure. I exchanged Switzerland for Honduras.



Honduras is full of surprises. First, there is no bus schedule. People are always late, and when I say “always” I really mean it. If you are planning something, there is not much chance for it to be achieved. And when you like to control everything like I do, you have to learn how to let things go. I had to learn to live each minute fully, without thinking about what will or will not happen next. I had to let go my European habits for Honduran ones. For example, I had to learn how to use tortillas instead of a knife to eat.



Honduras is a magical place. It is full of natural reserves. It is located between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Islands and mountains are part of the scene too. Honduras has every European characteristic. The Hondurans are really united. Especially united against the government! Honduras is sinking in corruption. You can trust neither the police nor the government. A Few days ago there was a strike against corruption. Thousands of Hondurans were walking in the streets. That strike took place in lots of places, not only in the capital. Hondurans want to fight back, they want respect. And in that kind of situation, they show unity, a strong one. By coming here, you learn from that. You learn how the poorest try to fight against the richest. You learn how to get up and fight back when the biggest one put you in the ground. You learn determination. It is hard to speak about social cohesion in this country. There is no cohesion with the politician or the government. Social cohesion is among the inhabitants. They fight together against that which is “untouchable”. What happened few days ago is only the beginning of a great, big movement.

As a volunteer with ICYE, I am working with FUNHICER, a non-profit organization created in 1982 by a group of volunteers. The main purpose was to provide high-quality treatment to children who struggle day after day with cancer. I work in the largest public hospital in the capital. FUNHICER supports approximately sixty children. I work with those who are in the ambulatory care. I play and communicate with them. Those “mini” human beings are the strongest people I have known. They never complain. Despite their young age, they never say such things as: «I am hurting» or «I am tired». They show

so much strength and courage. As volunteers, we envy them.

As a European, a little cough or a small headache becomes the end of the world. Putting life into perspective and learning to love it are lessons that the kids teach me every day. Those children who are not yet adults are more aware of the importance of life than an European adult. These kids are constantly facing death. Although they will not all die, it doesn't mean their friends in the hospital will survive. Those kids are so close to each other. The older kids take care of the little ones, and little ones give them so much love in return. One day a 4-year old girl, who suffered for several days of high fever, began to have convulsions. After that, her heart stopped beating. Doctors tried to revive her while her mother was shouting to the world and crying to God. This scene happened in front of four patients. What were their thoughts at that particular moment? Most likely: «Will I be the next one?». These children are survivors and fighters. They don't deserve what they endure. Yet they do not complain, and they stay strong. They imagine a future and never give up on their dreams. They will never stop. Working with them is the best lesson I can draw so far. And to be honest, I do not know if I could learn anything better than what I did with them. Cherish your life, love it and embrace it. That is what they teach you.

Julie Stuby, Switzerland (volunteer in Honduras)

Zusammen Leben

Living Together “peacefully” - That should be one of the main aims around the world. Unfortunately there are so many problems and conflicts between countries, between citizens in the same town and sometimes between family members, that's why the word “peacefully” is not possible or easy to achieve in some regions. I am sure that one day one person thought: How can that “little detail” be changed? How to make a difference in that field? I guess one of the tools to try finding the answer to those questions is through volunteering work. Especially when the volunteers are abroad because that gives them the opportunity to have a different point of view, a different perspective, different ideas from the locals, and it sometimes helps to find the solution to some problems that the community may have.

My project

My name is Jorge Luis. I am a Mexican volunteer in Fürstenwalde, Germany. The name of my project is “Park Club”; I have been the volunteer in my project in the last 9 months. I have done a lot of new things, and now I realize that volunteer work can take place in kindergartens, schools, residences for the elderly or with people with disability. My project is a youth centre where different activities take place like concerts (jazz, ska, rock, heavy metal, etc.), printer shirts, poetry nights, gardening, private parties, etc. The way of doing social work appears in places that you can never imagine. I think sometimes the combination of the right time and

the right place to do some work that makes a difference is necessary. I say this because as recently as in May and in collaboration with my project, local Germans and refugees, we developed and published a magazine 'Zusammen Leben' during the "Stadtfest" of Fürstenwalde.



"Sometimes people are afraid of what they don't know"

Last year during the "Pegida" demonstrations there were huge movements in many cities in Germany, and I was talking with my boss about it: How is it possible? How even after so many technological advantages and knowledge in so many fields, people around the world still don't know how to be tolerant with each other? We talked (and we keep doing it) about that and a lot other things, and then: the right time and the right place appear, and things start to come together. In the first demonstration in February against Pegida in Fürstenwalde, I heard a Syrian refugee (a sports journalist) who talked for a few minutes, then later my boss met him in another meeting and they got in touch and arranged a meeting in March, where we exchanged points of view about how to develop a project, what is the main aim of the story of the refugees, the human beings themselves: Why they are coming here? How they travel and risk their lives to come here? How they leave everything behind because of a civil war, a persecution or wherever reason pushes them to move from their homeland? And also to show that as different as they are in many aspects (language, traditions, etc.) they are also cooks, painters, teachers, mechanics... mothers, brothers, sons, they also are persons who may have something in common with, let's say, Germans.

That's the reason and how this project was born. The magazine has articles/interviews with refugees and related issues such as "15 Days on the Mediterranean", "The Syrian Conflict", "A letter to my Mother". The magazine "Zusammen Leben" is published in three languages: German, Arabic and English. It was really hard work to get the zero issue done because for most of the people involved in the project it was the first experience working on such a project. That reminds me of something I once read: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. So that zero issue proves that working as a team brings good results, even when it is a team formed by people who have different mother tongues, different backgrounds - maybe being different is not that bad after all.

This can be an example of what volunteer work brings, but how much change can a magazine bring about?

I don't know yet, but the project is on track and hopefully we can see positive results soon. Here it may be the bridge between people who don't know each other but who may have something in common, and this could lead us to finally - Living Together "peacefully" as a community.

Read you next time.

Jorge Luis Fentanes Colin, Mexico (volunteer in Germany)

Volunteering as I define it!

Volunteering as I define it, is giving back to society through service, educating and cultural exchange. When one volunteers, it serves as an opportunity to learn through experiences, training and also a chance of discovering hidden talents, developing new skills, it helps change certain mind sets we have by making us appreciate different forms of cultures and values, and meet a lot of wonderful people. My experience as a volunteer here in Switzerland has been an amazing one. I have had the opportunity to meet wonderful people from various parts of the world, I have made some great friends, developed new skills, I have learnt a language, and acquired a lot of knowledge.



Volunteering serves as an agent of social change by changing the perceptions of people, increasing tolerance and reducing stereotyping through cultural exchange. For example, my experience as a volunteer here in Switzerland has really changed my way of viewing things, I have come to appreciate the cultures here, what makes the people of Switzerland different from and similar to Ghanaians. At first I had the impression that most Swiss people are not friendly, reserved and distant. But I have come to realize that most people of the world are the same, until you make friends with them you will not know how amazing and true friends they can be. At my project, I have my colleagues asking me questions like; do the people in Ghana live in normal houses like we have here? Do they wear normal clothes? Are they living in slums? They ask all these questions probably because of the side of Africa they have seen in the media, but I

have been able to explain to them that Ghana is not so different from Switzerland or any part of the world, the only difference is that it is a developing country. So now the way they view Africa has hopefully changed. During my stay here in Switzerland, I have had the opportunity to see the beautiful landscapes, the seasons, and now I have come to appreciate nature more and more. Volunteering is an experience of a lifetime; it is something that remains with you for the rest of your life, knowing that you offered your quota to society just to make it a better place for others and yourself.



Valentina Akosua Tsanu, Ghana (volunteer in Switzerland)

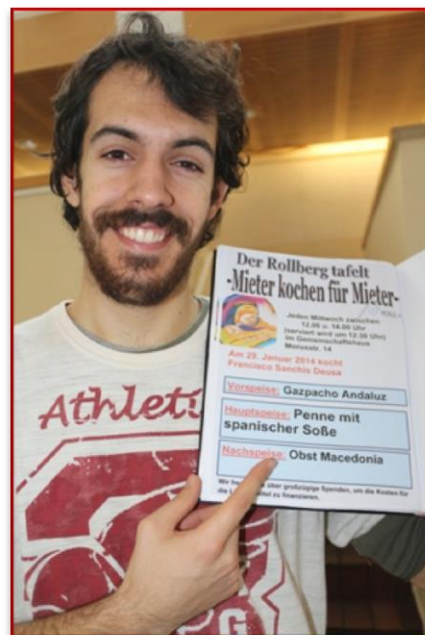
. Nachgeschmack: Lecker! Impressions of a volunteer in Berlin

Social cohesion in volunteering can be, for example, to gather people in the neighborhoods. I was preparing a Spanish lunch for over 50 guests, with the help of the fantastic kitchen team, in the project "Mieter kochen für Mieter" in the Rollberg Kiez in Berlin Neukölln. The year and a half that I experienced in Berlin as part of my volunteer program with ICJA was, to say the least, like a rollercoaster. My name is Fran, and I am a philosophy student from Espein, oh, I beg your pardon, from Spain. It is not far-fetched to state that we live in a time of acceleration and fusion. The general tempo of culture is beating faster than a hippie playing bongos on cocaine. What's the point, we may ask? In any case, things are stirring and mixing up. On what part of this world-mosaic party do we wish to dance?

Back in Valencia I longed for bonding on a more panoramic, global level, beyond the limits of national identity. This did happen, but not without sustained effort and perseverance. There was, as in the Ji-Jing hexagram number 3, „difficulty in the beginning“. Learning and using a new language on a daily basis can make a bio-milkshake out of your brains, and some alien-like situations may give you a shock akin to a little fishie being transferred into a chilly new aquarium. My boss, however, used to say: „Es ist alles ganz normal Herr Sanchis“. Quick adaptation is a must if you are to sustain your centre in the new environment (in a healthy

manner). Some of the qualities which helped me were: tolerance, flexibility, patience, discernment, boldness, persistence, and self-respect. A capital learning was how to care for myself and create a loving environment. When the homey warmth is not a given then it is up to you to generate the fire. Once this is achieved you can carry your inner fountain wherever you go. Very convenient!

It was a rich experience to move out of the known, and learn how to surf and live a new adventure. More than a one time travel, it has become a fantastic skill that I implement on life every day. Doubting and encouraging anything or anyone that seems stuck, listening deeply to the inner compass we are all endowed with, piercing through the nonsense and the noise and into a realm of clarity. Perhaps the most precious gift that stays with me is an exponentially raised love for people. Beautiful people with all kinds of different stories, all perfect in themselves. Being in touch with many others made me realize that there is fullness in relating and exchanging. Moving together. Despite the obstacles and tears, the thing that really stays inside after all this time is the joy of giving. Lasting union amongst individuals and nations alike manifests when your Light is shone freely throughout the world. Water trusts, thrusts, and in its quest is impetuous.



Francisco Sanchis Deusa, Spain (Volunteer in Germany)

The exchange is a unique experience

My name is Annabell Hellige; I am 20 years old and a volunteer from Germany working for one year in a kindergarten in Colombia. I came here as part of an exchange program and I am doing my voluntary service with the organization ICYE Colombia. Firstly, I would like to describe my daily work a little bit more. I am working

in the capital of Colombia, Bogota. My project is located in the south of the city, which tends to be settled by the poorer part of the capitals inhabitants. The district is called San Cristobal and my project's name is "Jardín Infantil George Williams".



My daily work is about helping the educators teaching and caring for the children. I am working with one educator and a group of 25 children between 2-3 years of age. Distributing the food and helping the children eat, doing art and teaching them things like numbers and colours are some of my tasks.

I've experienced that living in a culture different from your own teaches you a lot of things. When I came here, I had to get used to seeing poverty everyday directly around me, and I had to learn to live in a society with much more insecurity. At work I deal with people from lots of different social classes, for example, underage parents, children, who have neither their own room nor their own bed, but also well-paid parents like my own. This experience taught me that education is not accessible to everyone and due to this, not everybody has the same chance in the labour market. But this does not make people different. I learned to treat all persons with respect and to take their thoughts and words seriously. This is why I think that volunteering helps a lot to reduce social exclusion or discrimination based on culture or origin.

I found out that all people should be treated with respect no matter where they're from and how much money they earn. Children are exactly the same everywhere on earth, but the methods how they are raised differ. During this year of volunteering, I learned to accept to deal with these methods and to understand Colombian culture.

Now I also understand a little bit more about the problems in developing countries. This has helped me to limit my own prejudices and will hopefully help me to convey my experiences in my home country and to spread the message of how important equality, respect and cultural diversity are for modern society. Furthermore, I learned how to fit into a different culture,

and I also taught the people I worked and lived with about my own culture. This exchange is a unique experience for me.

I see myself as a small part that contributes to the elaboration of cultural and community cohesion because due to voluntary work, cultures meet and exchange during daily life in the project and host family. I can recommend this sort of social service to everyone, who is interested in different cultures, languages and countries and wants to widen his perspective of life.

Annabell Hellige, Germany (volunteer in Colombia)

The Harmony of Volunteerism

I came to Kenya in August 2014 for one year of volunteerism. I was set to work in an orphanage in Nairobi when my plans changed and I was assigned to work in rural Kisii as an English teacher. Although my plans were changed, my excitement for this year wasn't phased. I was still as motivated and ready as ever.

When my life in Kisii began, I learned that it was not only a new experience for me, but for the people I lived among. Being in such a rural place, many of the people in the village I was staying had never seen a white person in reality or been exposed to western cultures. Therefore, they were very intrigued by me and wanted to know more about my way of life in America and how it differed from the normal life they knew in Kisii. They not only taught me so much about their culture and their societal norms, but I also taught them a little bit about the society I come from. By exchanging these cultural aspects with the people of my village, we all acted as agents of social change by implementing what we learn from each other in our everyday lives.



At six months, I wanted to change my project and live in another part of Kenya to experience the differences of each culture between regions. I moved to a slum in Nairobi County, working as a teacher and physical therapist at a school for the disabled. Life was very different compared to life I lived in Kisii. I was now living very close to the capital city. Everything was one step ahead of the rural parts of Kenya I had come to get used to. But, nonetheless, I still really enjoyed my time for the last half of my year.

Working with disabled children, I really had to rely on my team, the other staff members, to help take care of these children, with them being a little more fragile than the average child. Having to work together brought a sense of cohesion, or harmony, among the different cultures at the workplace.

I worked not only with other Kenyans, but also with a fellow volunteer who is from Switzerland. Between the European, American, and Kenyan cultures, there were a lot of challenges regarding communication, professionalism, and what is and is not appropriate, that we all had to overcome. By solving any problems and conquering any obstacles that my team and I faced, we became a source of strength that proved to me, no matter your origins, all humans have similarities and are able to create and share experiences and memories together.

Being able to accomplish this sense of harmony with people I've only known for a few months in very different places in Kenya really taught me how volunteerism is just a vehicle for exposure, therefore, creating a resilience among the human race by being able to accept cultural differences, no matter how different the said cultures are. My time in Kenya was a rollercoaster ride of positive and negative emotions, gains and losses, and most importantly, lessons and teachings that I wouldn't trade for the world.

Melanie Gettler, United States (volunteer in Kenya)

Volunteers - Agents of Change!

-Wow!!!!

That's all I could say when in front of my eyes appeared this huge array of interesting faces, people from all over the world in front of me!... since that moment I knew that I would be living during the coming year in a dream location such as Berlin, where culture and diversity are present everywhere. I still remember my first month here in Germany, I was astonished, I didn't even know how to start the exploration, millions of images, stories, languages, everything I am interested in, all in one very place.

But let's start from the beginning, I will introduce myself, my name is Carolina, I am a Colombian engineer, and since last year I am a volunteer at the International Office of ICYE.

Since I was a child, reading history and listening to life stories has been a pleasure for me; every new person I know means an opportunity to broaden my conception of the world, my understanding and my brain. I would like to tell you what volunteering at the ICYE IO has provided me: international learning, cross-cultural skills, love for my country and my culture as well as a great desire to help to make of this world a better place for all of us. It is true, I have spent most of my year behind a desk, but this has been the most valuable experience I have ever had, as it has been the opportunity to observe the huge potential to make a significant change in the lives of people from a large number of cities and countries around the world. I have had access to the projects that ICYE offers in 35 national committees in

Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and north America, and it is moving to see how the hard work of youth like me and the expertise of others goes a long way to improve the conditions of many people, elderly, disabled adults and children, street children, single mothers, refugees, and in general in all the communities in which they contribute with their grain of sand to the great effort that is already being done.



The most incredible thing about my voluntary work is that I have been able to learn something from every volunteer who is a part of this big group of change agents. One of my tasks is inserting all the applications in a huge database filled with volunteers from all over the world, but I have to confess something, as I told you I really enjoy life stories, thus, before storing every form, I read the expectations, motivations and background of the Young people that have decided to embark on this great adventure of volunteering. Even better, I also read their feedback when they complete their ICYE experience. All these volunteers have really interesting stories that have become an inspiration for me. It has never been more clear... the joining of efforts not just of the political and economic organisations but of the whole community that helps without demanding money - this could really change our world! Caring of our environment and animals, ensuring the equality of women's lives and the rights of the child, caring for the aged and disabled - this will allow all of us to enjoy a better future, now I am sure, a better world is possible! As the Dalai Lama said, "Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions." I couldn't agree more.

But... as you all know, not everything is about work! This has been also the funniest year in my life, taking into account that I am living in a country with a very different culture from my home country, I have never felt alone because I have known amazing people along this adventure. I greatly appreciate the understanding I have received to face unknown circumstances. I have now new good friends with whom I have cooked, travelled, shared my culture and traditions, I have visited castles, rivers, museums, I have faced the influence of human decisions in the world history, I have tried food from almost the whole world, I have given and received smiles, likes and dislikes, sun, snow, wind, Nutella, beers, books, movies, stories, pictures and more pictures ... I have learnt some German, and now I understand that nationality means nothing, we are all citizens of this

planet and that it doesn't matter the colour of our skin, diversity in the way we live and differences are what make each of us special and provides us with a special power to connect with others in our community.



In retrospect, I realize that my life and the conception of the world have changed a lot. So if you ask me if I would recommend this experience, I would say without doubt: Definitely Yes!, this adventure has made me a better person, a better engineer and a better Colombian. Last but not least, I would like to extend an invitation to all of you to help build a nicer today and tomorrow. All of us can be volunteers; we can be the glue that creates cohesion in the community, and help to increase the members of our big team. We the "Agents of Change", let's start the revolution together, the revolution of small things

Carolina Leguizamón, Colombia (volunteer in Germany).

NEWS FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

2015 | State of the World's Volunteerism Report Transforming Governance

The State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2015 is the first global review of the power of volunteer voices to help improve the way people are governed. Drawing on evidence from countries as diverse as Brazil, Kenya, Lebanon and Bangladesh, the UN report shows how ordinary people are volunteering their time, energies and skills to improve the way they are governed and engaged at local, national and global levels. Better governance at every level is a pre-requisite for the success of the new set of targets for future international development, the Sustainable Development Goals, which are due to be agreed at the United Nations in September 2015. The report focuses on volunteerism as a catalyst for civic engagement that improves local, national and global governance. It explores volunteer action in relation to three key pillars of good governance – voice and participation, accountability and responsiveness. Read more about the report [here](#).

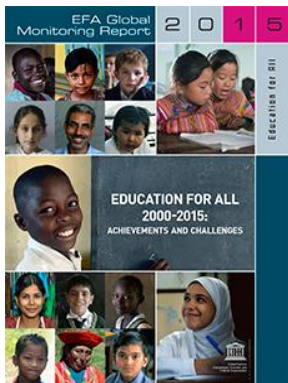
2015 Time for Global Action

The United Nations is in the process of defining a post-2015 development agenda. This agenda will be launched at a Summit in September 2015, which is the target date for realizing the MDGs. It is currently being elaborated through informal consultations of the UN General Assembly. There has been numerous inputs to the agenda, notably a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed by an open working group of the General Assembly, the report of an intergovernmental committee of experts on sustainable development financing, GA dialogues on technology facilitation and many others.

Entitled 'Transforming our World by 2030 - a New Agenda for Global Action', Zero draft of the outcome document for the UN summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda covers the four components of the Agenda: an opening Declaration; the Sustainable Development goals and targets; Means of Implementation and the Global Partnership; and Follow-up and review. [Read more](#).



UNESCO 2015 Education for All Global Monitoring Report



The [2015 EFA Global Monitoring Report](#) provides a complete assessment of progress towards the Education for All goals established in 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. The report takes stock of whether the world achieved the EFA goals and whether EFA partners upheld their commitments. It also explains possible determinants of the pace of progress and identifies key lessons for shaping a post-2015 global education agenda. The [“Action research to improve youth and adult literacy”](#) guidebook can be used as a resource for training adult educators and implementing participatory and collaborative action research processes.



The youth effect on gender balance in education

Can you imagine if you or a large number of your friends had to drop out of school before graduating? For most people in the developed world, the answer to this question would be a simple “no”. But the reality is that globally, 1 in 5 adolescent girls is currently not in school. Worldwide, 62 million girls of primary and secondary school-age are not in school. This number adds to the fact that most of the 700 million people who are illiterate are women. For more information: [United Nations Focal Point on Youth, UN DESA’s Division of Social Policy and Development \(DSPD\)](#)



[Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth](#)
[UN Women](#)

The Youth Effect, a new monthly web series produced by the UN Webcast, Department of Public Information, in collaboration with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, will explore different topics that affects the lives of young people around the world [Video](#).



European Commission launches the European Youth Monitor

The [EU Youth Monitor](#) is based on the EU Youth Dashboard, composed of 41 indicators  covering all eight fields of action of the EU Youth Strategy, i.e. Employment & Entrepreneurship, Social Inclusion, Culture & Creativity, Youth Participation, etc.. The European Commission has also published [41 statistical indicators](#) covering all eight fields of action of the EU Youth Strategy, including information on tertiary education attainment levels. [Read more](#)



The theme of International Youth Day 12 August 2015 is “**Youth Civic Engagement**”. The engagement and participation of youth is essential to achieve sustainable human development. Yet often the opportunities for youth to engage politically, economically and socially are low or non-existent. More efforts are needed to raise awareness about the importance of youth civic engagement and its benefits to the individual and to society, including for sustainable development as well as resilience and wellbeing. International Youth Day 2015 aims at promoting civic engagement and participation of youth in politics and public life, so that young people can be empowered and bring a full contribution to society, development and peace. You can be part of these efforts! [Read more](#).

NEWS FROM NGOs

Thousands around the world participate in Global Day of Citizen Action



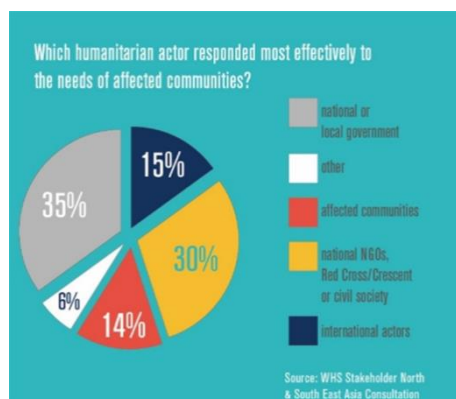
From Mexico to Mongolia, thousands of citizens around the world gathered on 21st May to exercise their fundamental rights to speak out, organize and take action on a wide-range of social issues. More than 100 events in 50 countries saw a combined total of over 20,000 citizens engaged as part of the 'Global Day of Citizen Action'. The purpose of the international campaign was to raise awareness about 'civic space', which represents the freedoms of expression, association and assembly. The campaign comes at an important time, as in many places around the world civic space is under threat from governments and, in some cases, from corporates and fundamentalist groups. To view more of this event, go [here](#).

New research reveals the unique contribution of volunteers in ending global poverty

New research on the valuable – yet often understated - contribution of volunteers in the fight against poverty has been realised on 17 March 2015 by VSO and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). The 'Valuing Volunteering' project, commissioned by VSO and conducted in partnership with IDS and volunteer researchers, explores how volunteers impact community development and social change in developing countries, as well as factors that can prevent them from doing so. The research - the largest study of its kind to date - was undertaken in Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal and the Philippines between 2012 and 2014 in the areas of health, education, governance and the environment. [Read more.](#)



NGOs: bridging the North South divide

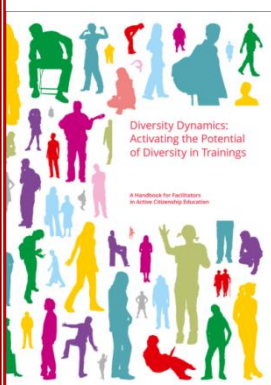


It's an age-old story of money and power that breeds mistrust and resentment. But can relations between major donors in the west and local humanitarian agencies in the global south be changed to everyone's benefit? "Crises and needs are at the local level in local areas, yet the funding comes from foreign governments to largely foreign agencies," complained Degan Ali, executive director of Nairobi-based African Development Solutions (Adeso). "We have come to regard western NGOs as 'international' and the rest of the world as 'local,'" she told IRIN. "When so-called 'northern NGOs' engage with 'southern actors' it's rarely a partnership, it's more of a sub-contract." [Read more:](#)

500 Days 500 Ways

500 Days 500 Ways, is a campaign to recognize the role of volunteers in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

This campaign counts with a website, that aims to highlight the variety of ways in which volunteering supports sustainable development – across continents and in a number of specialist functions. Volunteers and volunteer groups have made a very real, but too often invisible, contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This website will feature a new volunteer story every day. Have a look at the [website](#) to find out interesting stories from all over the world and submit your own experience in volunteering.



Handbook: Diversity Dynamics: Activating the Potential of Diversity in Trainings

The handbook published by MitOst Association empowers facilitators to develop diversity in their work with groups in every field of non-formal education. It promotes diversity and diversity consciousness as key issues in Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship Education, not only in youth education. The publication was developed with a contribution from different experts and practitioners in non-formal education. You can find the publication [on the following website](#).

Alianza por la Solidaridad launches online course on social volunteering

Is volunteering worth it? Can I do it if I have limited time? Is it possible to help people improve their life conditions in other countries from my own backyard? What does 'citizen of the world' mean? To answer these questions and many others, [Alianza por la Solidaridad](#) has launched an online course on social volunteering: [Citizen Laboratory for Social Transformation](#).



LABORATORIO CIUDADANO
PARA LA
TRANSFORMACIÓN SOCIAL

Green the Gene: A Youth-Run Environment Movement



Green the Gene is a completely youth-run, non-profit global environmental movement, founded in 2004 by a group of passionate, determined, and concerned youth. Back in school, they were taught about environmental problems and how they affect us all. What started as a small school club, led by the 18 year old Founder & President MadhavDatt, has now successfully built a global grassroots movement for positive environmental action with 4500+ children and youth volunteers across 42 countries. [More](#)

ICYE PROGRAMME NEWS

"Overcome all borders: UNITED against Intolerance"

International UNITED Conference near Malaga, Spain, 4-9 May 2015

In May, I was lucky enough to represent ICYE at the annual conference held by UNITED for Intercultural Action. Almost 100 representatives of NGOs from over thirty different countries gathered in southern Spain to address the issue of intolerance towards migrants in Europe and across the world. In the midst of the Syrian refugee crisis and the terrible Mediterranean shipwrecks, the question of migration has never been more urgent than it is today.



A wide variety of topics were covered at the conference, from how to create a viable media strategy, to the history of fascism in Spain, to discussions of the “real” meaning of the word Jihad. Particularly hard-hitting was Matthew Collins’ account of his life inside the far right. Formerly a member of UK right-wing extreme groups the BNP and the National Front, he told participants how he first developed extreme views, how hate speech led to violence, and how he switched sides, becoming an informer for Hope Not Hate. It was shocking to hear such a frank and – at times – graphic account of his experiences in the far right, but encouraging to know that there is hope for changing minds.

The conference also offered exciting opportunities for future collaboration. The “Infomarket” evening offered participants a platform to share their experiences promoting diversity and tolerance in their home countries, to distribute promotional materials and to exchange ideas.

Aside from the formal lectures and workshops, the conference was a true meeting of minds. It’s tempting to think that, when united by the common goal of stamping out intolerance, all participants represented at the conference would have the same ideologies. In fact, the opposite was true, and the conference was all the richer

for it. Outside the plenary rooms, in the gardens and the canteen, discussion continued – sometimes late into the night – on politics, religion, culture: everything under the sun. The UNITED conference provided a safe space where everyone was able to share their opinions openly and learn from one another.

After the end of the main conference, around thirty participants stayed on for a weekend of intensive training given by the ODIHR on combatting hate crimes. Debate was fierce and emotions high as we argued over the exact definition of hate crimes and how best to combat them. The training equipped participants with a concrete toolkit for recognising hate crimes and educated us as to the international bodies which exist to address them.

Above all, this year’s UNITED conference existed as a reminder that, even as European countries become more and more inward looking, migration policies become stricter, and neo-fascism continues to be a threat, there is an active community of hardworking idealists striving to bridge the gap between cultures.

Judith Fagelson, ICYE UK

Communicating Human Rights in Diversity

A KA2 Project and Capacity Building Training for Human Right Education Multipliers, March 19 - 23, 2015, Copenhagen, Denmark

In March 2015, 23 participants from 18 different countries from Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America gathered to attend a five days capacity building training for Human Right Education (HRE) Multipliers in Copenhagen, Denmark. The training set the course for the Key Action 2 “Communication Human Rights in Diversity” project, which focuses on initiating a culture of human rights and fostering respectful engagement between social / youth workers and project beneficiaries. The project involves 13 EVS volunteers, who have by now received training in human rights by the multiplier of the training in Copenhagen. The goal is for the volunteers to engage in their host projects in ways that generate awareness and ensure respectful engagement with vulnerable groups, i.e. the project beneficiaries, thereby breaking down the social hierarchy oftentimes found between provider and receiver of social work. The volunteers thus received training in HRE at the beginning of their time abroad.

During the training seminar, sessions and discussions on HRE were guided by Michel Banz, Human Right Education Advisor at Amnesty International, in addition to exercises supporting critical reflection on identity, stereotypes, privileges and communication.



The training included a visit to the project 'The Trampolin House', which initiates projects for asylum seekers in Denmark. A main focus of their work is to break down the "us" and "them" barrier that is often created by the dominant group or culture in a given society to distinguish itself from minorities, for instance between the Danes and the asylum seekers.

I had the great opportunity to participate in and help out at the training, as part of the ICYE International Office team. It was inspiring to meet the other participants and to experience first-hand how different backgrounds and experiences within the field can contribute to widening the discussions and debates. I was surprised to see how deeply rooted my own perceptions of human rights were, and how cultural identity often affected what people regarded as truisms / matter of course.

Descriptions and photos from the training sessions for volunteers in the 13 host countries (Ecuador, India, Kenya, Honduras, Nigeria, Indonesia, Mozambique, Vietnam, Colombia, Austria, Poland, and the UK) are being published on the ICYE Federation's Facebook page and volunteer articles will feature in the 38th issue of the ICYE Newsletter.

Camilla Roesgaard Hansen, Danish EVS volunteer at the ICYE International Office

Peace and Love Festival and Work Camp



PeaceWorks Sweden is organising a Work Camp at the yearly Peace and Love Festival (P&L) that will take place on 2-4 July 2015 in Borlänge, Sweden. P&L is a music festival based on the concept of Diversity, Understanding and Solidarity attracting more than 20 000 of visitors each year. Top musicians and artists from Sweden and all over the world are performing and lots of exciting activities and workshops are held during this three day long festival

Volunteers at this festival Work Camp will spread their culture and motivate young people to participate in activities related to democracy, human rights and diversity. Their main working area will be around the "Action Square" which is an arena for young people to express themselves and for spreading knowledge about other cultures and perspectives of the world. Physical work and promoting peace and cultural exchanges are the main tasks for the work camp volunteers.

You can follow the work camp activities and festival at P&L Facebook "Action Square på Peace and Love 2015" and at PeaceWorks Sweden's Facebook.



„Young Activists for Peace“

Kick-off meeting and training course for youth leaders, Berlin 19.-25.05.2015

In view of the eruption of hotbeds of war and growing tensions between Russia and its neighbouring states as well as the European Union, the Erasmus+ funded KA 1 project "Young activists for peace" by ICJA brought together youth and voluntary service organisations from Estonia, France, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine and Germany in support of peace education and to foster young people's action for peace

The kick-off meeting took place in Berlin and brought together two participants from each of the participating countries to undergo training on the methodology "Betzavta", get to know the concept "Friedensstifter/ Peacemaker" and to prepare two youth exchanges.

(The so-called "Peace Camps" will take place in two work camp sites in the north of Germany in July and August 2015 in cooperation with local peace initiatives bringing together a total of 60 young people from the participating countries.)

Besides the training programme, participants had multiple opportunities to get to know different historical and current approaches of promoting peace. The group visited and was very impressed by the "Anti-War-Museum" (see photograph), the Middle East Peace Projects of the Socialist Youth of Germany (Falcons) as well as by the history of peace work in ICJA and yap cfd. The group dynamic from the beginning was amicable and very positive about this opportunity to become active. At the end, all participants were very much looking forward to put theory into practice and to work together for the implementation of the two youth exchanges in July and August.

Info: http://www.yap-cfd.de/content/Seiten/Young_Activists_for_Peace_english/



High School Students 'Think Tank' for ACVE/ICYE New Zealand

At the ACVE office in New Zealand, we have appointed an Outgoing Coordinator to expedite our Sending programme. To this end, ACVE hosted a small group of senior high school students on 27th May, during their school's Service Day. Our aim was to create a 'think tank' and get an insight into the minds of our target market and what they are responsive to; through brainstorming, discussions, and sharing ideas.



Nickie-Jean had a program set for the day where we focused on what ACVE does, the projects on offer, how we can reach out to high school students, fundraising ideas, presentations for schools, what's popular in social media. It was extremely beneficial for us and for the students, as they enjoyed hearing about what we do and sharing their input.

The students turned out to be an awesome resource; leaving with a positive vibe about what we do and with wanderlust on the projects that they could be volunteering in. It not only turned out to be a great day for them, but for us, too!