



Worlds of Experience

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Volunteers at the Interface between Formal and Non-Formal Education

Dear friends,

A majority of the young people who volunteer abroad year after year are engaged in formal education (schools, adult education centres...) or work with children and youth. In different ways, these young volunteers support teaching in the classroom – by way games, simulations, theatre, music, sports... The 41st issue of the ICYE Newsletter is dedicated to the theme, *Volunteers at the Interface between Formal and Non-Formal Education*. This is also the title of a Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project that aims to strengthen the work and contributions of young volunteers providing support in formal and non-formal education host projects worldwide. Creating synergies between the two streams of education requires opening up spaces for interactive, cooperative and creative learning processes in order to inspire children and youth, in particular youth with fewer opportunities, to partake in learning and to acquire knowledge. This, we hope, will also initiate a change in perceptions about what education represents and what it can contribute in today's ever-changing world. Through her statement, "...playing is not necessarily contrary to learning, but can enhance and support the learning outcomes for children of all age groups," the Danish EVS volunteer Irene Neimann Rasmussen calls for more synergies between formal and non-formal learning. In **Volunteers Voices**, Irene and another **13 EVS volunteers** of the above-mentioned project presently volunteering in formal and non-formal host projects in 12 countries around the world narrate their experiences and their learning whilst using non-formal techniques to inspire young minds and let imaginations take flight.

News from International Organisations feature: UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016; UN World Population Day: Stand up for and Invest in Teenage Girls; UNEP/UNESCO: New YouthXchange Biodiversity and Lifestyles Guidebook; UNDP: Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace (Youth-GPS) 2016-2020. News from NGOs report on: The common struggle to implement UN Sustainable Goals; What are the 21st-century Skills Every Student Needs?; YouthMetro – Largest Repository of Youth Policy; Amnesty's free online course on refugee rights; and LLP Position Paper on „Integrating Refugees and Migrants Through Education“.

ICYE Programme News include: Visit to ICYE New Member KERIC, Slovakia; ICYE Switzerland's International Day 2016; Medical Camp 2016 in Kisii, Kenya; UNITED Conference: „Living Together: Transform a Divided Past Into Our Common Future“; and the ICYE Human Rights Education Toolkit and Impact Assessment Report.

Wishing you an interesting reading, we look forward to receiving articles and pictures for the next issue of „Worlds of Experience“, dedicated to „Volunteering: Charity or Solidarity?“. Please send your contributions to icye@icye.org, before 31 January 2017.

Warmest regards!

ICYE International Office

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

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Volunteers Voices

Learning and playing can go together

Irene Neimann Rasmussen (Denmark)
Volunteer in Ghana

"In your kindergartens, the children only play. In Ghana parents want their children to learn from when they are 3 years old."



The words were spoken by Madam Beatrice, one of my dear colleagues at my host project Sigma Child School. It was one of my first weeks in Ghana; I was still only adjusting to life here. Adjusting to the heat, to eating with my fingers instead of using cutlery, to the Ghanaian English and dialect, to evenings when the light goes off and water for bathing has to be fetched from a big water container outside. At that time, I was observing her examining the children in her class: *"We must wash our hands before eating and after going to the toilet - true or false?"*, she asked the three year old boy in front of her desk. He rubbed his eyes with his fist, looked around the room and at Madam Beatrice, but did not respond. She sent him back to his seat and marked his paper with a question mark.

Though I have learned that Ghanaian children are tough, I still think it is a lot to expect from them at the age of 2-3 years that they have to sit down through a whole day of learning numbers, letters, reading, writing and doing exams. And all this in English, a language they have just started to learn in school, as most children only learn to speak their local language at home. In Denmark, where I come from, the preschool is more casual though not unambitious. Learning objectives are different and directed towards developing the children's motoric, emotional and social skills, this mainly through playing. So how should I approach this, I asked myself. How to make my perspective on teaching, which is shaped by an upbringing in the Danish culture and school system, compliment instead of counter the Ghanaian school system, in order to get the most fruitful outcome? The content of the teaching, determined by the syllabus and the Ministry of Education, I could do nothing about, but what I could do was to give some inspiration to other less formalized ways of teaching, and thereby show that children can learn while playing and not only, when sitting on a chair and listening.

Some weeks after I had participated in Madam Beatrice's class, she agreed to try out a new activity with me. In an empty classroom we had set up an obstacle route with chairs, tables, ropes and drawn circular and triangle shapes on the floor with chalk. Each obstacle was marked with a letter and the children had to now walk, climb, crawl and jump their way through the route, while identifying the letters and shapes they encountered before each obstacle. Madam Beatrice instructed and showed the children how to do it, while I only assisted her and the children observed curiously, while waiting for it to be their turn. It took some time for the children to understand what it was all about because they are not used to activities like this, but in the end all had been through the route and received applause from the others. They were smiling, and I am sure even Madam Beatrice had fun doing something different, though she might have found it a bit silly to begin with.

Out of the activities I have been trying out with the teachers, some have been successful, some have not. Nevertheless I have learned something new about the teachers, the children, Ghanaian culture and society every time. I have been reinforced in my notion that we are very much shaped by our upbringing, schooling, and cultural background, and to therefore not take my own world view for granted. At the same time, I hope that Madam Beatrice and the other teachers I have been working with here have experienced a bit of the same. I hope they have also learned and gotten inspired by me and my different ways of teaching. That learning does not only have to be about numbers and letters, and that playing is not necessarily contrary to learning, but can enhance and support the learning outcomes for children of all age groups.

Land of ice without Tacos

Erick Iván Ruiz Saldaña (Mexico)
Volunteer in Iceland

My name is Erick Iván Ruiz Saldaña and I'm a volunteer in the Waldorf kindergarden in Iceland (yes, Iceland that magic island). My experience in general has been wonderful, I have been here for five months and it is very different to Mexico in many areas such as culture, weather and society and the most important thing, the food (no tacos, no tamales, no mole, no magical and delicious spicy sauces). To be honest, I have lived experiences that one day I am sure to tell my grandchildren about around a campfire while playing the guitar (if someday I have them and I meet them).

My day to day life is simple but exciting, I take the bus at the exact time (we don't have that in Mexico), I put on my earphones and I start to see Reykjavik like it is the first time every day. I'm really lucky because the bus passes by the coast (where I can see the mountain "Esja"), Harpa and the lake. The music which I am listening to in that moment makes me think about photos and videos which could be made of those views and I never get bored of that.

When I get to the kindergarden there is always some news, that Aron made Stígur cry or that Hringur is really tired. After work, depending on the time, I go to train martial arts or I go home to take a nap (yes, working with kids is exhausting because they are little vampires who steal my energy). When I get home in the evening I talk to my flatmates and I go to bed.



Iceland? This mysterious island is harsh, different, with really beautiful landscapes and stories. However, the harshest thing a person like me can find here is: ICELANDIC. If you have never tried to learn Icelandic before (which is very possible) let me tell you that IT IS HARD! To be honest the thing that makes it harder is that almost everyone in Iceland knows English, and that's the reason why so many people from other countries who are living here don't care to learn it.

At this point maybe you are wondering, why is that Nordic and ancient language important? Dear reader, I want to say that Icelandic is the cornerstone of my project and everything I have learnt. Being in an Icelandic kindergarden without knowing at least basic Icelandic is the equivalent being a lost penguin in the desert.

Speaking Icelandic at the begining was quite hard, but it has taught me that words are very important when you are teaching children and that in each language the meaning of them can be really different. It is important to use the right words when teaching children about playing with respect, for example. I tend to use phrases like "mundu eftir þetta er til að leika" (remember that this is a game) when they are using something to hit, and "þú þarft að spyrja fyrst" (you must ask first) when they want to take something from someone else.

The main idea in the kindergarden is to let them discover and play by themselves using the most beautiful gift from the gods: IMAGINATION, here is when the non-formal education comes with all the power to the kindergarden to let them imagine a piece of paper as a spyglass or a chair as a bus; the limits are imposed

by that wonderful machine, the brain, which is beginning to learn how to work.

Sometimes I play the guitar, the flute or bongo drums for them. I also help in extra activities such as taking pictures and making videos for the kindergarden group on Facebook. Trust me when I say that it is quite hard to take pictures of children because they are moving all the time, but they are really natural when they are captured in pictures.

Basically that is what I have done, learnt and developed in this adventure. There are many stories to tell, but this is enough for today. Takk fyrir að lesa (thanks for reading).

Ways of learning

Ambika Shorny (Austria)
Volunteer in Nepal

As the non-formal education project in Nepal had already gotten underway before I got involved in it, my participation in it was pretty hasty. It all began when I came across an announcement looking for a volunteer to take over a project to provide non-formal education in Nepal. The volunteer who was involved in the project before me had unluckily fallen sick and had to return to Austria. After contacting the project to declare my interest, filing my application and fulfilling other formalities, I attended few orientation classes before my departure from Austria. I also had a few orientation classes on my arrival in Nepal. Then, I also received a short training on how to impart non-formal education in Nepal. Furthermore, I've been taught the basics of the Nepali language, a language so different that after more than two months here, I still cannot speak more than a few words.

Right from the beginning, I have been surrounded by warm and friendly people. I love being part of this wonderful project which is doing exemplary work with the help of volunteers and locals. So my host family has probably the friendliest and most helpful people I could have ended up with. Spending time with all these people from different social and cultural backgrounds and nationalities gave me the opportunity to widen my horizon about cultural values, strengthen my social and communication skills as well as helping me learn a lot about different ways of living.

Starting to support teaching in a public school close to the place where I live was the next step towards achieving the goal of my project: promote non-formal education in Nepal. For the first time, I got the chance to implement what I've been taught before and to face the challenges of being seen as a teacher. Even while taking over regular classes, I soon realized that I, as a volunteer, could never replace a formal teacher. Without any knowledge of the local language and without a teaching qualification, i.e. appropriate teaching skills gained through an educational background, volunteers will always somehow apply methods of non-formal education. I soon stopped using

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English lessons mostly by using pictures and through various activities and games.

The support to teaching aspect of being a volunteer requires a lot of flexibility. I never know how the students will react to whatever I have prepared, sometimes I'm surprised by the little things which can turn one activity into a completely different one. I learned to accept that I have to adapt my plans during the lessons according to the circumstances. As I am half-way through my stay in Nepal, I'm curious about what will happen during the remaining time, and I'm looking forward to further interesting and inspiring experiences.

My EVS Journey

Anita Mabandla (South Africa)
Volunteer in Slovakia

My name is Anita and I'm from South Africa, I've been doing EVS (European Voluntary Service) since April 2016. My EVS journey has been such a positive influence in my life; I've met some great people and made memories that will last me a lifetime. I've learned a lot about Slovakia, other cultures and also a lot about myself. I've managed to do all this by completing activities such as support English lessons as a foreign language in the local schools of Slovakia. Also with my host organisation KERIC, I worked on summer camps and a youth exchange where I helped inspire young minds through activities they might not have got a chance to do if it weren't for EVS. I also worked in a charity where I helped people who needed it the most, giving out food and sorting clothing to give to people. I've used both formal and non formal learning to help educate people while I was here and this is why I think each has good and bad points.

First, when I came to Slovakia I didn't expect anything because I'm not the expecting kind of person. I just came and told myself to adapt to situation I get into. During the first week, I stayed in a host family with parents and three host sisters and it was amazing. I felt welcomed and warm, they showed me a few places around and it felt so comfortable, it was perfect. After a week, I moved to the volunteers' flat sharing a flat with youth from different countries. I then started going to schools for Euro Week where I got to see that Slovakia is closed country because the kids were so excited to see me, they wanted to touch me because of my skin color. It was amazing for me because I could see the impact of me being here to make them open-minded and I saw how they were so

interested of my country. Then I went to the EVS on-arrival training where I got to meet volunteers around Slovakia and we became friends, travelled together to Prague and we are still in contact. Our friendship will last forever and we still visit each other, which is amazing. I went to summer camps, which was new for me because I had never had a chance to lead camps before and where I learnt to take the lead. And now I'm going to lead a youth exchange and I'm looking forward to it so that I can use my leadership skills, which is also what I do in schools and at KERIC English lessons. These lessons have also helped me develop my English and non-formal learning skills. It is amazing how much experience and growth I've had in few months though EVS



Formal education is good for older students as they want to focus more on the topic, maybe by writing in books or taking tests, it is better for their more developed minds to just focus on the task at hand to achieve a goal. It helps when they can see the progress in front of them as it gives them motivation to continue. On the other hand, if formal education is used with younger children they grow bored and maybe this creates hatred towards the subject being taught as they need less mental stimulation and more physical and things they think are fun to help inspire them to continue with that subject. Non-formal education is good for both younger and older students, maybe more the latter as it can be used for example using some English words in a game and then the children will learn the words without even realizing and then they have a mental link to this activity which has been labeled as "English" as fun due to them playing games and also learning the language. In conclusion I believe non-formal education is the best as I have seen it work with children, and it is my go-to method while teaching children as it not only helps to motivate them to continue but it's also fun for me to take part in the lesson and to continue to do what I am passionate about. It has given me the leadership skills which will help me with future employment. The EVS experience has also helped me find myself, I've grown as a person, and it is my driving force to continue to lead and inspire people to do what they love. This is only the start of my journey. I have a long road ahead and EVS had already opened doors for me and given me ideas about life.

Volunteering in Ananya Trust-India

Naomi High (United Kingdom)
Volunteer in India

I am currently volunteering in Ananya Trust in India, a non-formal education based school for disadvantaged children who have dropped out of government funded schools. Many of them are from slum areas of Bangalore and have parents/family members with alcohol/substance misuse issues and economic/health problems. Ananya Trust pays for the transport to and from school, the healthcare needs of the children and their immediate family and provides all meals/ school supplies free of charge. The parents are asked to contribute €2 a year many of whom don't.



There are approximately 40 boys and 20 girls aged 8-18 living here from Monday to Saturday. The responsibilities of the volunteer starts on Monday morning to clean the campus before the children start arriving from 8.30am. Each volunteer is assigned a dorm room of 10 children to take care of and be responsible for waking them up and to ensure they have good personal hygiene. I am responsible for the youngest and newest boys aged 8-12. With this age group there can be a language barrier. There are five languages spoken in the school with the children having different first languages. They receive Kannada, Hindi and English classes. As there are different languages being spoken, I have found it difficult to learn a language and the children and the staff always speak in English with the volunteers.

The classes are relatively non-formal and the children are roughly grouped into abilities of mixed age groups. There is no grade system in the school and taking exams is not compulsory. They also receive theme based classes where they concentrate on a specific theme such as beaches in India and they learn all things relevant to beaches. Life skills classes are also part of the curriculum in Ananya which includes me learning about healthy relationships and problem solving skills. After classes finish at 3pm, we play games such as football and cricket until 5pm when we break for tea. The volunteers are then free to do an

hour long activity with the children. The children enjoy arts and crafts activities and it is a good way for them to take their minds off home life. Many children show challenging behaviour as a result of how they are treated at home and are often aggressive towards others. As volunteers we try to reinforce what they are learning in the life skills classes and encourage them to put it into practice. Some activities I have done with the children include making ancient Greek shields, drama, reading and UK based activities such as making a London bus...

As Ananya trust is a non-formal school, it is less about bridging the gap between formal and non-formal education and more about reinforcing what they have learnt in the classroom. The children aren't always responsive to structured sessions and often not interested in learning new things which can make the evening activities difficult. Ananya is a unique school where as I mentioned earlier they clean the campus themselves, learn how to prepare food and grow vegetables. This is also part of their non-formal education and lots of the children take pride in their responsibilities. It is also a good opportunity to include other non-formal learning activities and during this time I often play spelling games with the things around us.

Most of the students in Ananya have dropped out of formal schools as they find they are not interested and aren't learning much. In Ananya the non-formal way of learning means they don't always realise they are learning as we make the activities fun and child-centred around what they enjoy. This means they are learning more than they would using a more formal method. For the children who attend school in Ananya the non-formal way of learning is essential for their success in the future.

My enriching experience in a Finnish Residential School

Daniela Vázquez Sánchez (Mexico)
Volunteer in Finland

My name is Daniela Vázquez Sánchez, I am volunteering in the Sippolankoulukoti in Finland. This Residential School comprises about 50 staff taking care of 20 to 25 youngsters between 12 and 19 years old. The reasons why these youngsters live and/or study here range from mental, psychological to family problems related to sex abuse, drugs, alcoholism.

Sippola is a very little town/village located in the region of Kymenlaakso; buses are the only public transport and they are far from good because there are only two from Sippola to the nearest cities, one from the nearest cities to Sippola. This is useful for the school in order to avoid having the youngsters escape; though of course some of them still find ways of doing it.

My time at school is divided into 4 classes: 2 in the Main Building, 1 in a separate building, and 1 in the Special Care Unit, where I have spent most of my time

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and found to be really interesting. I have been supporting teaching English and Spanish lessons. I also led some art lessons by teaching Mexican art and cooking lessons by cooking Mexican food. I participate in the music and sports lessons, and help staff to maintain the rules of the unit, e.g. cleaning the kitchen, giving the children tools to clean the house, talking to them about all kinds of stuff... so I follow the rules and give them an example to follow.



During summer, I still worked in that unit, doing all the home activities already mentioned, as well as cooking and of course eating with them. We went swimming in the lake many times, playing badminton and exercising at the gym. There, I could experience the informal and non-formal education, while spending time with them, building a family atmosphere for and with them, talking about their problems and evaluating their tasks in order to solve them. They have a system with written daily and weekly tasks to be discussed later during a group discussion (twice a week with lots of candies and chocolates). The aim is to treat them well, to respect their thoughts and feelings and of course to guide them according to their beliefs or wishes.

Nowadays I support 4 different classes, as I have organized my own schedule. I organized, for instance, some Spanish lessons for the only boy who wants to learn it; my mentor provided me 4 old books for Finnish people who want to learn Spanish, so I adapted the best pages I found from them and combined them with my own material. This way, I got to make a tiny syllabus to follow, and each day I wrote down the most notable progress. I have the same system for the English lessons. But for this, I use more conversation tasks. I try to make both lessons lively; I always start by saying something about me and then asking about them. I show them pictures of my hometown in Mexico, I tell them funny stories about the cultural differences I have found between Finland, Mexico and other countries I have lived in, and suddenly, they don't notice how interested they can be in knowing about the countries' location, or how the food looks like, and then we start some questions on cards I have already prepared.

For Arts and Home Economics lessons, I have had the chance to first show them how Art and Cuisine is in Mexico, and then we start creating our own things inspired by this Aztec, Mayan or Nahuatl influences I have. They do follow my plan, yes, because they know I support the teacher, but I also let them tell me anything they would like to have for the class. We discuss the activities they like and I give them a little feedback

to improve. Teachers here do the same, and I feel proud about the fact that it is something I've been doing for many years already with my students in Mexico. I like how the Finnish system for Residential school works, and I like how non-formal education works no matter whether it is in Mexico or Finland; my Mexican students liked that I try to give real attention to their learning, not only to follow the syllabus. I try to make them more confident with their learning, and to cooperate with each other, which makes things easier in a large group. For that, I make smaller groups and instruct them to support each other over one month. The next month they have to work with and support another set of people I choose. It is a structure that helps them learn from different personalities.

And opposite to what some people may think, I never get bored during my free time in Finland! Staff is super kind and nice to me! They always help me when I need them, and some of them have become my friends. It has been great to have a support person in Helsinki, a support family in one of the nearest bigger towns, and one in Sippola. They are always for me to cook together, have dinner, go swimming to the lake, take me with them to their celebrations or events with family and friends, and even to pick me up somewhere and give me a lift to my home.

I dare to say my volunteering in Finland has been very enriching in many ways. It has been a very personal process that I needed before coming here. I had worked as a teacher for 5 years in Mexico, and I felt kind of exhausted with all the hard work with little children and adults. This was my chance to prove to myself I can actually work well with what I consider the most difficult age group of students: teenagers. It is not the first time I am working with non-formal and informal methods, but it is something not well embraced in Mexico yet. Now I am sad to be leaving Finland soon, but happy and excited at the same time, of coming back to continue bridging this gap between formal and non-formal education.

Non-formal Education in Nepal

Rikke Melgaard Kristiansen (Denmark)
Volunteer in Nepal

In April 2016 I made a major change of setting when I moved from the third largest city in Denmark to a rural area in the Kathmandu valley of Nepal. Here I spent the four months working with Nepalese children doing non-formal education and generally living life as close to the one's the local people lived. This included literally starving at times, using their facilities (and lack thereof), eating the same meal twice a day - every single day and loving every minute of it (almost J).

Undoubtedly what I discovered, and what most other people, who move the way I did, discover, is that there is a huge difference between travelling through or in a country and living there. Cultural differences

and challenges are felt on a whole other level when you are residing in a country. On the other hand, you also have much larger joys and you gain close friends for life. Friends I personally will treasure and keep with me every day of my life.

During my project I came across many challenging moments on both social and moral levels and they were extremely hard to deal with it at times, but it was equally giving, if not even more. The training I received was basic and limited when it came to dealing with the actualities of the events taking place at my project. I worked at a small government-run school in a small village. In Nepal anybody who in anyway can afford it, goes to a private school, therefore the kids I was teaching were mainly very poor and from backgrounds of limited funds and socially challenged families. One place where I attempted to use non-formal education and the training I had received for it was, for example, through activities where we “played shop” and pretended to run a small business. The kids had pretend-money and could buy different things whilst learning proper polite phrases as well as calculating change and managing budgets.

In the beginning I must admit I brought my own experiences and expectations about education with me, which proved to be a huge mistake. As soon as I got into the mindset of the Nepalese, everything ran smoother. This was not easy though, as the educational background I come from has imprinted deeply into my mindset. Yet when overcoming that challenge, I realized that these kids mainly needed a reason to come to school; someone who cared about them and asked them about themselves and their lives. They loved conversations (that mainly happened via gestures and badly spoken Nepalese on my part and English on theirs) as well as hugs, laughs and games: all the things that were not, for obvious reasons, prioritized in their own homes. I got people in Denmark to donate clothes, I brought food once in a while, school equipment and toys, but what I think made the by far biggest impacts was that there was just someone there, who noticed them and was genuinely interested.



The lessons I learned from travellers and mainly the locals I was surrounded by, in particular the host family with whom I lived and the children I met in the school, I take with me in everything I do. They have taught me so much about life, how it can be lived and the many facets of happiness that are not linked to wealth, appearances and power as one sees in West-

ern societies. For that I am forever thankful. Another key element one could take away from their culture.

A wonderful journey through ways of learning

Angélica Camargo Flórez (Colombia)
Volunteer in Poland



My name is Angélica Camargo Flórez. I am from Pamplona, a small and beautiful city in Colombia. I am an art student in Medellin and I am currently living in Pułtusk, Poland. I have been here for six months and I am doing my EVS in the project “Volunteers at the Interface between Formal and Non-Formal Education”. My program runs around non-formal and informal education with kids from 14-17 at a few schools in Pułtusk, some events in the town and some promotion of volunteering work.

Since I arrived in Poland, I got involved with different cultures because I share the flat with people from different countries and that gives me the chance to know more about their countries. I also attend trainings, events and, of course, lessons, as part of my project. I must say that I am very glad to be part of this type of project because it is the perfect way to teach and learn all the time. It is very challenging to prepare and support lessons in a different (non-formal) way; it is also nice to see some results after that.

First, I want to share some of my regular activities; every week I visit a school, where I meet Spanish students, divided into three different groups, twice a week. In addition, I support some lessons in another high school and eventually some lessons at one seniors' house. It is interesting that from the beginning to teach Spanish is such gratifying work. For people in Poland, no matter how old they are, Spanish is an easy language, also with my flat mates, we tried to exchange some basic words from our mother tongues. Games are an important part of my project; it is the best way to get the attention of the group and a good environment for learning. Some of the games I modified specially for the lessons. To be part of several trainings and meetings with more EVS people has been essential for my lessons because after every meeting I am full of new ideas to apply in my project.

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As part of my week's schedule, I am taking some Polish lessons and I am very glad as it is incredible how everything changes when you begin to understand the culture and the language. A new place appears in front of you when you recognize small details in the way Polish people are, talk, celebrate, eat and live. All of this is perfect when I can apply my Polish to help teach Spanish. The relationship between the students and I has become more fun, and they also start to teach me some important words and pronunciations.

For the next months I just wish to improve my Polish, a language that has given me an open mind and also to improve my skills in non-traditional education. I think is fantastic to have two ways of learning. I invite all young people to be part of this marvelous and intercultural exchange. Cheers from Poland.

La vida en Bravo Páez

Lenka Hudackova (Slovakia)
Volunteer in Colombia

I have been volunteering in Bogotá, Colombia since April. My project is to develop non-formal education in a public school Bravo Páez in the southern part of the city, which is known as kind of dangerous and poorer than the rest of the city. That is also why many children come from complicated family backgrounds (maltreatment, abandonment...).



In many cases their living conditions inevitably influence their behavior and academic performance. I've been trying to work with them on a more personal level – in groups or individually and that has helped to create a stronger connection and mutual respect. I am working with various age groups and on different subjects. I am doing some activities to introduce and promote English language among the youngest kids. I do some English conversation practice with older pupils. I have also spent a lot of time in the primary school where help is needed with learning everything – reading, math, English. I have been doing some activities with youngsters that have trouble with basic skills such as reading or writing or have some behavioral issues. I also try to influence their behavior and values, for example, with a group of few boys we are doing a project to develop and increase ecological consciousness in the school. We are promoting the

importance of recycling in school and responsible usage of water and energies in our homes. These groups of kids are also getting some geographic and social sciences knowledge through non-formal learning techniques.

As I have been working with a great variety of pupils, I have gained many useful skills, such as managing groups, supporting teacher with various non-formal education methods, problem solving, psycho-sociological skills, and even some nursing skills. I could learn about differences in cognitive and emotional development among different age groups. I feel that every single day I have learnt something from my kids, since each of them is a unique personality and possesses some inspiring qualities. Openness to mutual learning is therefore for me the key to non-formal education and its practice in schools and formal education centres.

Your attitude can make all the difference

Wara Quezada (Bolivia)
Volunteer in Slovakia

It is inevitable to make this story without feeling that immense happiness that drowns you. So far I am in Slovakia since six months with unforgettable adventures, learning, new friends and places that I had never imagined knowing.

As part of my volunteering at KERIC, I go to different schools to present my country and share my culture. It is called EUROWEEK. We are also responsible for organizing summer camps and youth exchanges, which is an amazing experience because I have met many new people. Once a week we open the LANGUAGE CAFÉ which is a space for young people to share and learn different languages. Then, we have optional projects, we can choose between cooperating with Senior House, charity, sport, etc. I choose charity, I love that experience as it is a warm environment where we can help people with limited resources and many of them have taught me different things about life.

I'm also assisting with English lessons in KERIC, where we use non-formal education methods, e.g. games that incorporate and support English language learning. It is really visible how young people are more open to speak the language and how they improve their vocabulary. For our lessons we use some books on different topics but we also create some games and interactive activities to teach them. The teachers at KERIC teach us how to adapt the interactive methods used with for volunteers for the kids in the English lesson. We had also summer camps that I have enjoyed so much. Six days of playing, doing workshops, dancing... I taught juggling and some songs in my own language which is Spanish, we had some "disco nights" as well, where we learned that we can have a

real fun time being ourselves without using stereotypes. I learned to be like a child again and that feeling is the best. I think that non-formal education is essential for developing new kinds of ideas about the educational system. We can consider our needs and address them because it helps break barriers, makes us less shy in society, and learning a new language opens the doors to the world. In general throughout my project I felt great, the important thing is that you absolutely accept everything as a new life experience. I think that 80% of how you develop and enjoy your volunteer service is your own attitude.



I share an apartment with 5 volunteers from different countries, some leave, others arrive ... Soon it will be my turn to leave and I can't think about it. I have said goodbye many times without knowing if I will see that person, I learned to enjoy every moment, every second because time passes too quickly. This time has freed me of many things which has been filled with riches - I opened my mind, I found inner peace, I felt a lot of freedom to be myself, I discovered many things about me and the most important thing is that I grew personally and professionally. It will be very hard to say goodbye to this magical adventure, but my project will not end here, I will continue to grow from these roots as this time has helped me to plan my future more clearly. I can only say, do not wait any longer to do your EVS, it doesn't matter if you're afraid, if you're confused, there is a phrase that opens the doors to the world: JUST DO IT.

Discovering myself in Mexico

Tamara del Puppo (Italy)
Volunteer in Mexico

My eight months of EVS in a school in the Mexican city of Puebla are a life challenge, a great opportunity to expand my knowledge, but above all it's a psychology graduation and maturation process. My EVS began on 1st of April 2016, I arrived with a lot of enthusiasm and curiosity, I was eager to encounter a new world and eager to know it all. My project is a part of the "Programa Esperanza", which aims at helping to improve the conditions of schools which fall in a lower economic stratum. I'm volunteering in "Colegio Luis

de la Torre", a school with a kindergarten, elementary and junior high school; I'm currently working with primary school children. As soon as I arrived, the smiles of the children I received made me very happy. They asked me many things about myself, my country, my family and my traditions; and I was amazed how curious they were. It was great to discover how fantastic it was for them to be able to learn that there is a country with a difference in hours, where they can catch a bus at a specific hour and place, or a place where they don't eat chilli or other things!

I soon planned non-formal education activities like games and songs in Italian. I created activities to teach the children the names of colours in Italian, days of the week, and about Italian traditions or icons like famous monuments Colosseo, Torre di Pisa. I also taught them about typical food like tiramisù or spaghetti and how to introduce themselves and to describe their friends in Italian. I use non-formal education activities to develop the emotional capacity of the children. The school needs such activities and I could also combine my psychology skills with my volunteering experience. I used the games to develop their respect, friendship and their ability to work in a team. Once a week I focus on activities for parents with problematic children, for example, we had moments of reflection on the parents' situation and their relationship with children. The project is a fundamental part of my experience but my EVS was also about learning to live with a Mexican family: so as to get used to their habits, lifestyles and to cook Mexican food (fantastic Mexican food!). When I arrived my lifestyle was very different, but I learned about Mexican culture pretty fast. I learned to go slower and to appreciate the time and to enjoy the different moments of the day. I'm completing this experience with a different vision of my lifestyle and how I can connect with other people - I learned to stay alone and this has given me the tools to plan my life as I like. I think living this experience allowed me to see new places, to know new people, new ideologies and it made me stronger, the realisation that I am unique with my limits and my strengths.



Cape Town got me

Miroslava Dorčáková (Slovakia)

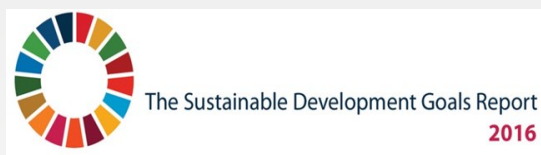
Volunteer in South Africa

I remember the day I came to Cape Town, South Africa. My worries were not big as I know myself. I am a strong woman. I knew I will be able to adapt fast. When I saw Table Mountain for the first time (from the plane) I almost cried. And I still feel bit sentimental when I look at that powerful mountain. Cape Town got me. Nature, people, lifestyle, fashion, culture, all of it... My host family became my new family. I do miss my real family, but I know I have here somebody I can rely on. Somebody who takes care of me, worries when I come home later, cooks for me and asks me how I spent my day. It is priceless and very helpful, especially here in South Africa. I am sure many of you heard about criminality in South Africa and Cape Town. It is real. The media sometimes exaggerates but often does not even mention daily crimes which happen here. My first week was tough. I felt scared. Even though I went to Ghana for three months two years ago, here I felt unsafe and it took me about two weeks to get rid of the feeling.

The school, where I volunteer, is based in area, where you can meet very random people. I am still street wise, but at least not scared anymore. Mary Harding School was established for children with mental disabilities. Our children often come from poor backgrounds and are victims of murders and rapes. At the beginning, I tried to be their friend. I am not a teacher but a volunteer and I never wanted to become a teacher, but during the half year that I have been here, it came naturally. I observed my colleagues and their educational methods and I applied them in my time here at the school. My learners call me teacher. That is natural but I am not a teacher by profession but in my own right I am. I have a responsibility now and they listen what I say. The principal of the school acts as a supervisor for my learning and contribution at the school. My role in the school is to support the teacher through creativity and other non-formal education methods. I am provided with support and resources and I am allowed to exercise experimental learning using different methods. A few times a day I choose some of our students (normally about four to six at once) and I take them with me for some activities. It is challenging to work with them. Some of them are able to communicate with me but some of them do not understand English or their mental disability does not allow them to understand me. But I am patient with them. We draw, we paint, we listen music, we play games; sometimes they ask me about my personal life and my country. I also ask them questions and try to teach them something new through art. It is not what I expected to do here in South Africa, but I am satisfied and happy when I see students leaving class relaxed and asking me, when I will come to fetch them again. I feel satisfied in general. Even though I had a few moments at the beginning when I felt alone and lost, but I preserved, and now I feel happy as never before. Thank you EVS for giving me this opportunity and life experience.



The Sustainable Development Goals Report



Launching the first-ever Sustainable Development Goals report on the new global development agenda adopted last year, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that the 15-year undertaking is “off to a good start” but will require all parts of the UN family and its partners to work together. Read more [here](#).

International Fund for Cultural Diversity



Civil society – change agent and cultural watchdog



The International Fund for Cultural Diversity fosters the emergence of a dynamic cultural sector by supporting projects that cover a wide range of areas, from the development and implementation of cultural policies, to capacity-building of cultural entrepreneurs, mapping of cultural industries and the creation of new cultural industry business models. The IFCD is a multi-donor, voluntary fund and it relies on donations from governments, individuals, civil society and the private sector. As a key operational instrument of the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, its goal is to promote sustainable development and poverty reduction in developing countries. Read more.

Stand up or and Invest in Teenage Girls, UN says on World Population Day



Leaders and communities must focus on and stand up for the rights of teenage girls, particularly those who are poor, out of school, exploited, or subjected to harmful traditional practices, the United Nations has

said, marking World Population Day with a call to bolster the success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by investing in better opportunities for teen girls. Despite significant gains made in reducing poverty and improving opportunity and well-being for many people around the world, hundreds of millions remain desperate for a chance of a better future, said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today in his message on the Day. Read more at [here](#).

UNEP / UNESCO: New YouthXchange Biodiversity and Lifestyles Guidebook



UNEP is pleased to share its latest publication on biodiversity for young people. It provides well-researched insights into the interactions between biodiversity and the lifestyle choices facing young people by explaining the interrelatedness of food, consumption, culture and biodiversity conservation. It guides youth on how to preserve biodiversity through responsible lifestyle choices and suggests starting points for engagement and action. This guidebook also helps young people understand the role they can play in preserving biodiversity today and tomorrow. [More](#)

UNDP: Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace (Youth-GPS) 2016-2020

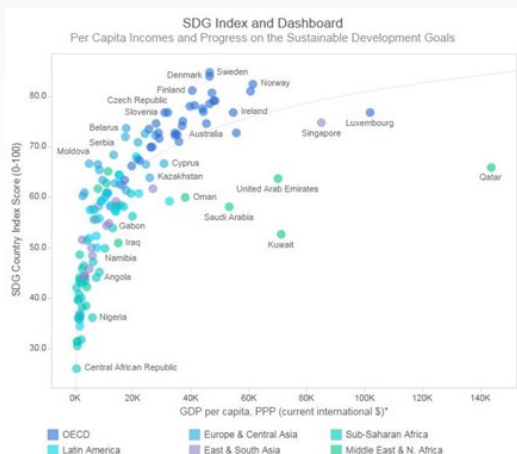


Youth-GPS, UNDP's Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace, is rooted in the belief that youth empowerment is both a human rights imperative and a smart investment in sustainable development and peace. It is aligned with UNDP Youth Strategy and is a response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security. This new five-year global programme applies a multi-dimensional approach, offers a multi-level response (global, regional, country) and promotes young women's empowerment in particular. [More](#)



In 2015 world leaders came together and made a historic promise. They signed up to 17 Global Goals – the Sustainable Development Goals – that have the potential to end poverty, to reduce inequality and to tackle climate change in 15 years. At the heart of the goals is a commitment to ensure that ‘no one is left behind’ and that no goal is considered met unless met for all. In an effort to identify the communities and groups of people most in need, the Leave No One Behind Partnership is conducting an online consultation with civil society groups that work with and on behalf of the most marginalized and disadvantaged people. [Read more](#)

The common struggle to implement UN Sustainable Goals



Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) published the first, country-level index to track progress on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals, which were adopted last year by 193 member states of the United Nations, aim to improve the lives of all people and build a more sustainable, inclusive and prosperous world over the next 15 years. Measuring progress will be critical in making this ambitious plan a practical reality. The index highlights the considerable gaps in data that exist for many of the goals and corresponding targets, such as measures of decent work and quality of education, and underscores the need for greater investment in statistical capacity and data collection. Read more [here](#).

Turbulent Times: Skills for a Global World



If recent events have proven anything, it's that the world in which our young people are growing up is turbulent and unpredictable. Over the past 12 months, Think Global has been working together with OCR to look more closely at questions about the skills young people really need to live and work in such a world. [Read Think Global's Study here](#).

What are the 21st-century Skills Every Student Needs?



The gap between the skills people learn and the skills people need is becoming more obvious, as traditional learning falls short of equipping students with the knowledge they need to thrive, according to the World Economic Forum report *New Vision for Education: Fostering Social and Emotional Learning Through Technology*. Today's job candidates must be able to collaborate, communicate and solve problems - skills developed mainly through social and emotional learning (SEL). Combined with traditional skills, this social and emotional proficiency will equip students to succeed in the evolving digital economy. See more at [here](#).

YouthMetro – Largest Repository of Youth Policy



YouthMetro, a vast repository of youth policy, has been launched by the People for Change Foundation. The platform provides a “one-stop-shop” where young people, youth organizations, policy makers and academics can find policies and best practices in youth policy. It is organized across the 10+5 WPAY areas, as well as additional topics such as disability, indigenous issues and humanitarian crises. [More](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vuvys7Wcv3s&feature=youtu.be>

Register now for Amnesty's free online course on refugee rights



You can now register for Amnesty's second massive open online course (MOOC) on human rights. It will help you gain the knowledge to defend and promote the rights of refugees across the world. Places are unlimited on our free online course Human Rights: The Rights of Refugees which will be available for 12 months from 16 November 2016 to 19 November 2017. [Learn more.](#)

Integrating Refugees and Migrants Through Education



Since its creation, the Lifelong Learning Platform has always advocated for holistic and humanistic vision of education that builds inclusive societies and good quality lifelong learning opportunities for all people, as also laid in the LLL Platform 2015 *Manifesto on Building the Future of Learning in Europe*. In this position paper, the LLL Platform calls on EU Member States and other relevant actors to take responsibility, respect international laws and ensure integration of refugees and migrants into host societies through lifelong learning! [Learn more.](#)

Visit to ICYE New Member KERIC, Slovakia



The ICYE Federation Board of Managers and ICYE International Office staff met in Čadca, Slovakia from 4 – 7 October 2016. The meeting in Slovakia served the perfect opportunity to learn more about ICYE's new member organisation KERIC and the region of Kysuce where KERIC is based.

Founded in February 2003, KERIC is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation working predominantly with children and youth aged 4 - 30 but also adults. KERIC offers a wide range of activities with an added international dimension that helps to develop the personality of children and youth; the activities differ based on the needs of its participants. KERIC's mission is to connect the region of Kysuce with Europe and the whole world. It's main activities include conversational language courses, computer courses, international youth exchanges, EVS, summer and winter camps for young people, seminars and trainings for youth worker from all over the world, creative workshops in the KERIC Underground Club or at local schools in the region, sending and hosting EVS volunteers to and from Europe and Latin America. KERIC have implemented a number of Erasmus+ projects with partners from around the globe. They are currently working a project with Maailmanvaihto-ICYE Finland and FIYE-ICYE Poland on improving partnerships with host organisations.

KERIC has three staff members, two of whom are the founders of the organisation, and host annually about 9 volunteers. It is located in the city of Čadca in a 3-storey house where the language and computer courses and many other activities, like the Language Café in the basement, take place. We welcome KERIC to the ICYE Federation and look forward to deepening our cooperation with them.

ICYE Switzerland's International Day 2016

On Saturday 3rd September 2016 new ICYE incoming volunteers, host families, EVS volunteers, co-workers and the staff of ICYE Switzerland got together for the traditional International Day in Lucerne, which marks the end of the introduction month.

After a few weeks of preparation, 19 volunteers from 15 different countries set up an international market

with different stands representing their countries. The volunteers offered a real world tour to the visitors and provided at their stands typical food, information and games from their home countries. On stage, the volunteers performed amazing Ghanaian and Latin American dances, as well as an impressive singing performance.



On this very special day, all ICYE incoming volunteers met their Swiss host families for the very first time. After cutting and enjoying a piece of the big ICYE Switzerland cake, baked specially for this event, the volunteers left with their host families for a new step towards their adventure in Switzerland: their voluntary service! We wish them all the best for the exchange year and look forward to meeting them again for the mid-term camp!

Medical Camp 2016 in Kisii, Kenya

Kisii, Kenya



ICYE Kenya, in partnership with the Kioge Medical Clinic and Ministry of Health in Kisii, Kenya, organised the Kisii Medical Camp from 26th June to 2nd July 2016. The main aim of the camp was to raise awareness of the importance of hygiene and sanitation. ICYE Kenya co-workers, staff and 13 volunteers assisted the medical officers and nurses in conducting malaria and other tests, providing training on hygiene and sanitation, nutritional counselling, HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis awareness and counselling, etc. The tremendous support provided by the volunteers and ICYE Kenya team brought the camp to a successful close on 2nd July.

UNITED Conference: “Living Together: Transform a Divided Past Into Our Common Future”

Juan Sebastian Gomez
Former Colombian ICYE Volunteer



It seems more difficult now than it was before to understand current political events in Europe. Conflicts are now diverse and multi-layered, have a thousand motivations and it seems many of them have part of their roots in other continents.

Back in the eighties, when the communist bloc was dying, the world could still be understood in two political languages. In the nineties we read, still on paper, on pain of new born countries trying to leave a troubled past of dictatorships and imposed homogeneity, while in western Europe the EU was coming to life and celebrated as the most ambitious continental project in recent history, to ensure peace and stability.

We struggle now to understand what happens. The European Union fails to unify its posture and actions, disconnected from regional democracies seem to beget resistance and a surprising apathy, while new forms of fear in society gave Nation States one more chance to intervene (both correctly and erroneously), become strong and awaken dormant feelings of specific identities. Identities that push the boundaries of those old States, and of this young supranational experiment.

This is the Europe where refugees arrived this past summer. That hyper diverse Europe, now more than before, reveals the tears and pain of coexistence, something has never been nor will be easy. At the conference Living Together: Transform a Divided Past Into our Common Future organized by UNITED, an NGO that has worked for many years to foster living and understanding difference and diversity, we decided to study the most interesting cases of reconciliation in Europe and the world to reflect on what happens today, design strategies and find a common objective for grassroots' social work and the role of alternative and non-formal education – like volunteering - in societies today.

We came to know the experiences of peace processes in Colombia, South Africa and our host country, Macedonia. We listened to the testimonies of activists on the balance of two decades of complex coexistence in Bosnia, Northern Ireland and the challenges of many countries with a communist past to heal their wounds, to know the truth and build collective memory.



We also discussed "new" wounds that need also to be healed. Since 1993 UNITED along with other organizations, keep track of the people who died trying to get into "[The Fortress of Europe](#)". Fatalities are more than 22.000. Uprooting and internal conflicts of newcomers also define the new European social geography. Conclusions? Much work remains to be done, but it is still crucial to recognize and understand the new European cultural reality. We live in a postcolonial Europe, which transformed its countries, not only in their physiognomy but in his understanding of the world. It also transformed its political and social tensions, almost ontological now. It has been a painful confrontation between worldviews (Weltanschauungen) that grew and also changed themselves, precisely where Western secular life was born.

This is a new Europe with a new Islam, secular and radical and a new secularism, progressive and conservative where conflicts are to be solved no longer by "tolerating" and "adapting" "foreign" cultures exclusively.

Slowly we are finding that the path to reconciliation must lead us to a new discourse, a new narrative and perhaps a new way of understanding inequality and the economics that generate violence, stimulate migration and displacement. All interconnected problems, typical of a new global era.

Publications of the Erasmus+ project

“Communicating Human Rights in Diversity”



The Erasmus+ Project *Communicating Human Rights in Diversity* may have come to an end, but the concerted efforts of the human rights multipliers and the EVS volunteers in the project made it possible to produce two publications, 1) *Toolkit: Human Rights Education in Volunteering*, and 2) *ICYE Impact Assessment Report – Human Rights in Diversity*.

The HRE toolkit provides guidelines for exploring the concepts of diversity, intercultural communication and the values on which human rights are based. It offers four training programmes, each addressing a specific area of human rights work, i.e. 1) Gender Equality and Human Rights, 2) Children and Human Rights, 3) Disadvantaged groups/The displaced and Human Rights, and 4) Health/Disability and Human Rights. The training programmes and methods presented in the guide draw on interactive group processes of an international human rights multiplier training and subsequent local trainings implemented within the scope of the above-mentioned project.

The Summary and Report of the Impact Assessment explores the experiences of 18 international volunteers, examining the personal, social and cultural impact of the human rights learner-centred project on the volunteers. The findings of the study demonstrate that voluntary service creates greater well-being for the volunteer as a result of processes that boost personal growth and develop competencies for life and career. Personal growth develops in and through the volunteer's meaningful contribution in local communities. The volunteers gained a deeper understanding of their own role in caring for the well-being of others; likewise they enhanced their ability to assume that role by acquiring new skills, attitudes and values.

Read more about the project, the full summary and report of the study and download the toolkit here:

<http://www.icye.org/communicating-human-rights-in-diversity/>