



Worlds of Experience

No. 46 (August 2018)

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Making a difference: From conservation and health care to art, culture and education

Dear friends,

ICYE's volunteering programmes centre on the idea of cultural exchange between a volunteer and the local community and the long-term benefits this can lead to for both sides. Voluntary service is regarded as creating greater well-being for the international volunteers and potentially for others/local communities as well. The reasons for volunteering abroad are varied, but a mix of personal and altruistic motivations drives most young people. The findings of the impact study conducted by ICYE within the scope of the former Erasmus+ project "Communicating Human Rights in Diversity" (2014-2016) reveal that volunteers tend to stress learning and personal growth as outcomes of their voluntary service. The idea of mutual learning is evident in their narrations on encountering diversity. Thus, the volunteers' role is understood in terms of planting seeds of change through exchange and dialogue during the voluntary service. Moreover, their role in the well-being of others is learned through their experiences of making a positive difference. In this issue of the ICYE Newsletter, we focus on ***Making a difference: From conservation and health care to art, culture and education*** and examine what exactly it means to 'make a difference' – be it in environmental conservation, healthcare, art, culture or education – to have an impact as an international volunteer.

In **Volunteers Voices**, we present articles by six young people volunteering in Colombia, India, Finland, New Zealand and Poland, who reflect on their volunteering experiences and illustrate how in small ways each one of them is making a difference in their own lives and those of others. As the Costa Rican volunteer in Poland tell us in his article, "The power of one must never be underestimated", which is further emphasised by the German volunteer in New Zealand, who explains that, "Even if it's just small changes [...]. It will help them to continue to make bigger steps and changes."

ICYE News feature: MaaIlmanvaihto – ICYE Finland celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2018 and ICYE Colombia's Multiplier Training on Intercultural Learning. **News from Int'l Organizations** feature: 12 August 2018 - International Youth Day on the theme "Safe Spaces for Youth" and Beyond 2030: Youth Taking Charge of the Environment: World Environment Day - June 5th 2018, on [#BeatPlasticPollution](#). **News from NGOs** report on the UNITED for Intercultural Action European Action Week Against Racism 2018 and UNITED has updated its List of Refugee Deaths

Wishing you an interesting reading, we look forward to receiving articles and pictures for the next issue of "Worlds of Experience", dedicated to "Skills and Competences for a Global World". Please send your contributions to icye@icye.org, before 30 September 2018.

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

Kia Kitea Toikaka - Nothing but the best

Janina Baal (Germany)
Volunteer in New Zealand



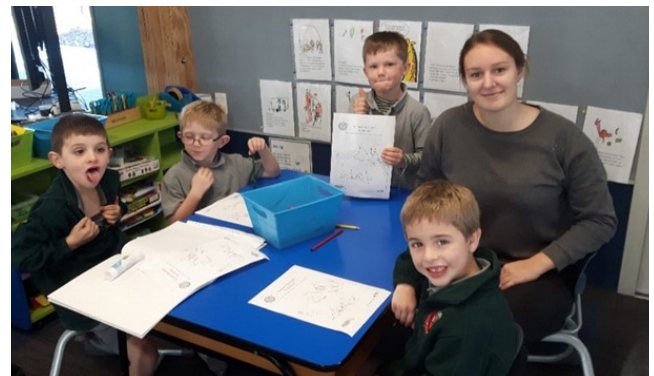
Have you ever heard the story about the boy and the starfish? Let me fill you in: Once upon a time, while walking along a beach, a wise old man saw a young boy in the distance picking up starfish one by one and tossing each one gently back into the water. The wise man came closer and called out, "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?" The young boy looked up and replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean." The wise man smiled and said: „I must ask then, why are you throwing starfish back into the ocean?" To this, the young boy answered: „The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they will die." Upon hearing this, the wise man commented: „But, young boy, do you not realise that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!" The young boy listened politely. Then he bent down, picked up another starfish, threw it back into the ocean and said, "Made a difference in the life of that one."

Trying to make a change in the life of somebody can be very difficult, especially when you're only around for 6 months. It is important to never lose sight of the ultimate goal - making a lasting difference in somebody's life. It is very important, even when you're just laying the base for it, as one of the teachers here told me. Have a look at the world map, at the bottom south-east of Australia, you'll find New Zealand. Look a little closer at the South Island and you'll find Christchurch in the middle of it. Now Culverden is a little bit north of Christchurch, but it's tiny, so don't worry if you can't find it.

Here at Amuri Area School with its 340 students amazing things are happening. When I started working at the school six months ago, everything was completely new for me. I had no experience in working with special needs kids or kids with a learning disability. For this reason, the first week was very overwhelming. It took a few weeks to fully understand the dynamics of how everything works. The kids and I got to know each other better every single day. After a while, I realised that through working with them I have learnt a lot about myself. They have changed me in a beautiful way; teaching me to be open, think in abstract ways and not to take so many things for granted. That's when it became clear to me, that having a positive impact on somebody, can contribute to a huge change in not only their life but in my own. We have learnt many things from each other. During my time here, I worked with many kids, but I'd like to mention some of them in particular. The very lovely Mikkie is mentally impaired and needs help with a few daily tasks. I taught her how to read a clock and she taught me

to be patient and to change perspective. I definitely enjoyed her company and even if it's just a small contribution to Mikkie's journey to become more independent, it's more than worth it. Nick and Jade are two gorgeous kids, who are struggling with maths. I put a lot of effort in showing them, that maths can be fun and helpful in lots of ways. On their part, they helped me to improve my English. It was a very big step forwards for me to teach maths in my second language, so I couldn't be more thankful for our time together. Rose, a delightful little girl, who recently moved to the area, pretty much calling for help when she arrived. She barely knew the letters of the alphabet and neither could she write them. Now, five weeks later, she can name 24 out of 26 letters and can write almost all of them. Even if it's just small changes I achieved in the children's lives, it helps to form the base for their learning. It will help them to continue to make bigger steps and changes. As mentioned above I have noticed a change in lots of things that I do after the many experiences I have had at Amuri. Working in a different country, with a different culture, different language means stepping out of your comfort zone and making a difference for yourself.

I indeed feel very lucky to know all these amazing people at Amuri Area School. They are teachers, teacher aides, parents, counsellors, volunteers and so many others. In my opinion, the school motto „Kia Kitea Toikaka – Nothing but the best“ is more than perfect because all of them made it their life purpose to make a lasting difference in so many children's lives and to always give it their very best. There is such a strong bond amongst them because everybody has the same goal: To look at a child and say: „We made a pretty big difference in the life of that one!"



The power of one must never be underestimated

Stefan Fiedler Alvarado (Costa Rica)
Volunteer in Poland

The questions of interest are how young people volunteering abroad and not fluent in the language, customs, working practices and styles of the host community make a difference. In addition, how do volunteers' experiences shape their present and future, and therefore also their attitudes toward others? We all dream of somehow making a difference in the world. We want to enable someone to do something they need, to help another have a worthy quality of life, to love another person.

The best way to understand how I can make myself important and make a difference, plus understanding who I am has been by being lost; far away from home, in an unknown land of unknown people. Such is my case as an international volunteer. After high school was over, I was in search of a new adventure

and of myself. I decided to set out from Costa Rica to Poland. For the first time I was about to travel across the ocean by myself, to live by myself and to volunteer at a children's rehabilitation centre and school for almost one year. Simply put, a volunteer experience enriches our humanity. This happens at a personal level, which is deeply interconnected. As a new volunteer, meeting new people is the norm. You meet new people in your work, in your living situation, other volunteers in situations similar to yours, and in as many places you find yourself in, be it a party, or a bus travel, or just a random person in the street. You come to understand that, fundamentally, all people are the same.



We all share the same dreams, dears, desires. We all have the same kinds of concerns. We all have the same types of feelings. With this awareness, comes a feeling of deep unity with others. We find that our idiosyncrasies (called nationality, religion, race, etc...) are important, but are not what makes us human, nor what makes us tick on the inside. We inevitably compare ourselves and our cultures (languages, histories, customs, tendencies) to the new ones we discover. We criticize that which we dislike in our and others' cultures, just as we place on a pedestal that which we love. There is a need to share our cultures, to expose where we come from. We share what we like and what we don't. And through that exchange, we better understand where we come from and why we are how we are, and we better understand the people in the world around us. The power of one must never be underestimated. Very often in life, we go on believing that we are unable to affect the environment which surrounds us, as if we were nothing but a ghost. Any volunteering project is probably the best place where youth ignorant of their own potential can learn precisely how important they can be for the people around them.

I knew I was making a difference for the children I worked for when their faces lit up with hopeful smiles as I walked through the halls of their school with the list of children I was to take to "Hipoterapia" (therapy with horses). I could feel I was making a difference when calm overcame the child riding the horse I guided. I knew I had left a mark in the children's hearts the day we had to say goodbye, as we laughed and hugged for one last time.

Left the bubble

Jan Beez (Germany)

Volunteer in Colombia

A lot of us came to do something "different" from what we had done in school and our free time. When we talked at the preparation camp about what our year would be about, many perceived teaching, sharing our own life, organizing good activities at work and of course getting to know another culture as really important. After having arrived in our host countries, a lot of things were different than we expected. I'd say that a lot of volunteers get a different role in their projects than they had imagined. This was in my eyes the beginning of a learning process, sort of a change of our minds.

So what are we doing during our year? We give classes, organize free time activities, tell things, and can bring fresh wind, energy and ideas into our projects. I think that these activities are really important, especially at the beginning of our work in our projects in order to create a good relationship with the persons involved and to keep our own motivation on a good level. But then something happens. We slowly listen more than we talk, learn more than we teach and get to know more than we tell. That's how we begin to live another reality trying to understand, trying to fit in. During the last 10 months, I have learned to be a person who is way more open to other opinions, ways of life and prejudices. I have learned to understand where those opinions and pictures come from and I began to question my own thoughts and ideas. I have become an open-minded, more attentive person. Most important seems to me that I'm more aware of what's actually happening around me. I don't just believe what I hear, what I see on TV or read in newspapers. I like hearing and reading a lot of different opinions and voices. That made me more interested in other people, and I don't create for myself a picture of somebody just based on her outer appearance.



For me personally it has been extremely interesting to talk with and get to know a lot of different people. I'm working at the National University of Colombia where I have friends that lead an "easy life", same as we do. They receive a good education; live in good neighborhoods and so on. I have a friend that travels every day for nearly two hours to the University, and he was by far the only one of his grade that was able to enter to the National University of Colombia. If we want to, we can become aware of problems such as social inequality and we can try to understand and feel why and how many people treat those problems and injustices. This is just one part of leaving

Volunteers Voices

our personal bubbles in which we lived all our life, always had the same friends, talked with the same people etc.

To conclude that, I want to ask you what you think when you hear "Colombia". Everyone of us brought something to our host countries, and we all learned something different in those countries. We'll take that back to our home countries and we'll have something to tell in our home countries. That's how we can make a difference. In most western countries, we tend to just hear the bad news of less developed countries but everybody that has visited such a country can talk to his own nation about what's really going on, and we can make them wonder and question their own thoughts. We're many young people who have and had different experiences, and we're a lot of people and all together as a group, we have a lot of power against rising extremism and populism all over the world.

Who makes the difference?

Sergio Perez (Colombia)
Volunteer in Poland

I guess every person deals with the idea of "what is my purpose on this life". We question ourselves if we are destined for something bigger in this world, we live day by day trying to find a place where we will be able to feel important, to feel needed, a place where we feel we are making a difference.

You can read this and interpret it in two different ways, the first being that I am the most selfish person and I need to feel important, or the second one is that I am someone who is willing to change his life to help others improve theirs.



When you look for the definition of making a difference, you find that both feelings are described. You will find that it says, "to be important in some way" but also says, "to do something that helps people or makes the world a better place," and in my experience I have found that somehow you will always have a little of both feelings.

I work in a school in Pułtusk, Poland, as a volunteer with kids from eight to teenagers of 16 to 17 years. I do a lot of different activities, and on some days I get tired or have a headache or even wonder if what I am doing matters. But the laugh of a child, a hug from a kid, a sincere thank you from a teenager, these small actions make my day better and not just my day, these actions give me a real answer, they scream, "yes, your volunteer work matters".

So call me selfish if you want, but when you are on the top of a mountain (literally, after a long hike) and teenagers come to you and tell you how grateful they are that you pushed and motivated them not to give up, you can sit down with them, compare the hike with life and teach them that when you are tired or close to giving up, you have to push to be successful. So I know I am making a difference. Or when you arrive at school and the kids run towards you to hug you, and even when their parents come to pick them up before leaving, they hug you to say goodbye, I know I have made a difference in their lives.

But when you look at your work and feel satisfied with what you have done and the impact you are having in others people's lives, you also realize how much of a difference they are making for you, how much you have changed, how much you have learned, how much they have made your life better. For me that is even more significant than feeling important, the learning and the growing that you get as a person is way more satisfying. So yeah, I am making a difference, but I can assure you that the difference that the kids I work with are making on my life is bigger.

I guess that for me that is what volunteering means, putting in time and having the will to make a difference, but also being open to change, growing and letting others make a difference to your life. Then, who makes the difference? Is it you and is your work as a volunteer changing them, or is it that the people you work with are changing you? I hope that the answer lies in the balance between the two.

Making the little things count

Cora Kupper (Germany)
Volunteer in India

Coming to a new country, a place far away from home, a different culture, an unknown language and a diverse variety of foods and spices. Coming to India for 12 Months. Working in a new surrounding and meeting lots and lots of new people. Volunteering.

Before coming to India, I set some goals for myself, I had expectations, others had anticipation, or better yet, I had hopes. On the other hand, I tried my very best not to draw a picture in my head of what was awaiting me. I went and was just excited and open to everything that could come up. As soon as I arrived, I realised that things might be different, not as I expected. By living here for the past six months, I learned that it is never about the quantity that you reach, it is never „how many“ children you taught something or „how much“ money you raised.

It is about the small things, the unexpected. No task is too small or insignificant. Even making one person smile makes a difference. To speak about myself, I found out that through small changes within yourself, you can have impact on others. By telling the guy who is selling you mangos that you don't want a plastic bag to carry everyday again, he might realise that there are more environment-friendly alternatives to plastic bags. Or he will simply ask you why you don't want a plastic bag and through this you will have a little talk on the whole topic. I feel that starting a conversation about different topics and raising awareness is the most important. While I was travelling to meet

a volunteer friend in the nearby city, I learnt so many different things from the guy sitting next to me on the train, about the local festival in his home village this weekend.

In the next moment, while I answered his questions about Germany and what drove me to come to India for one year; he invited me for tea at his place in the city. On the next day, I was preparing coconut chutney together with my host sister, and while she taught me how to prepare different varieties of chutney and which spices to use, I told her of the spices I use in Germany and why no coconuts grow in Germany. I really feel that it is the exchange with each and every person that makes a difference, as I am always learning something new.

As I am working in a preschool with children between the ages of three and five, and even the smallest act has an impact. Only saying „thank you“ and „please“ make a change. They discover „Farmers and Carrots“, a new game they love to play that I showed them, which I learned in my physical education class in primary school in Germany.

The kids do not care about different religions, origins and castes, but by showing them things they don't know, they are gaining new perspectives. The exCHANGE will make a CHANGE by connecting cultures, religions and people. And not only for the people I work, live and talk with it will make a difference, but firstly it also makes a difference within myself. I feel that I am the person gaining the biggest impact from this cultural exchange even though it is only through small steps. Mainly then, it is about making the little things count...

Open your mind by volunteering

Max Schodry (Germany)

Volunteer in Finland

Volunteering in Finland started for me just after I finished school in Germany. Still in school, I started to think about what I wanted to do next. I always liked traveling and I wanted to try something else before continuing to study or start to work. Furthermore, I lived with my parents and a year abroad would gain me some independence. Then I started to search on the Internet for different possibilities of “work and travel“, until I found information about volunteering. That sounded really interesting and I spoke with someone who already volunteered for one year with the German IJFD program (Internationalen Jugendfreiwilligendienst / International Youth Voluntary Service) in Iceland. The program matched with what I wanted to do and Finland was one of the countries I chose because I am a big fan of outdoor activities and nature.

My application was accepted and I got a project in Finland: I would be working in a primary school in a small Finnish town called Alavus and living with two different host families over the next 12 months. At the primary school, my tasks were mainly helping in the English lessons, like supporting the children in their exercises or making photocopies, etc. for the teachers. Besides these tasks, I had the possibility to do school clubs. I started at two sport clubs and a Minecraft club, which were first established by former volunteers. Another possibility was to have small English lessons on my own. In these lessons, with usually 3-5 children, we normally repeated the grammar from the lesson, played some English games or learned vocabulary. I changed host families after half a year and both families

included me in their family activities and life.

They took me on vacation in Lapland three times and I celebrated birthdays, Christmas, etc. with them. At the same time, I had my own room and lots of personal space if I wanted to. I realized that the stereotype of Finnish people that they are very quiet and not open to foreigners was not true. Many people were really interested and wanted to talk to me a lot. I had many challenging situations during my time in Finland.

When I arrived in Alavus, I knew nobody and I did not have any friends at first. Luckily, I had a good connection with my host family and I could do something with them in my free time. In general, it was hard for me at first to be the ‘new one’ everywhere, but after the first two months I met new people and found some hobbies. I obviously had rewarding situations as well: I was really happy for example to see that the children with whom I had some extra lessons actually improved in English and had better grades at the end of the year. Living in a different country for a year, I learned many things and gained a new perspective on some topics. Before I went to Finland, I had never been away from my home for more than a few weeks, so I gained more independence and self-esteem. Moreover, I learned so much about Finland and experienced the Finnish way of living. At my project, I saw what it is like to be a teacher and even if I had a really great time at my project with so much fun and different activities, I realized that I didn't want to be a teacher at a primary school. In Finland, I met many people, learned a lot about Finnish culture and met volunteers and other foreigners, which all helped me to lose stereotypes and improve my understanding of other cultures.



I also became more open-minded because of my volunteering, which according to me is one of the main reason to go abroad for a year as a volunteer. You will change your own beliefs and values and you can do the same for others. At least I hope that while I learned about Finland, the kids in my school, my host family or other people could learn something from me about Germany.

The camps organized by hosting organisation Maailmanvaihto and my German sending organization ICJA prepared us volunteers for this intercultural interaction. In the end, I know my volunteering didn't make a big change, but I think some people are inspired now to meet new people from other countries and cultures.

ICYE Finland: 60 Years of Fellowship



60 VUOTTA KOHTAAMISIA
60 YEARS OF FELLOWSHIP

Maailmanvaihto – ICYE Finland celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2018. [A lot has happened in sixty years](#). Maailmanvaihto started as a student exchange organization in 1958. Over the years the organization's activities have evolved into the current form: organizing international voluntary work opportunities for young adults. Throughout the years we have worked for advancing intercultural understanding. Also during the anniversary year at the core of our activities are interaction and cooperation, which creates understanding between people.

As the focal point of the anniversary year, we are organizing a celebration on the August 25th 2018 in Mustasaari island in Helsinki. Everyone who has taken part in Maailmanvaihto's activities in the course of years is warmly welcome! At the celebration, we get to enjoy a tasty meal as well as speeches and other entertainment, such as a photography exhibition compiled as a part of the anniversary year. There are a limited number of seats, so make sure to secure your spot at the best party of the summer soon!



The theme of the MaailmanVaihtoa – Volunteers' Voices 1/2018 is 60 years of making a difference. The issue mainly consists of articles written in Finnish, but you'll find something to read in English as well!

Besides our homepage, you can follow the course of the anniversary year through our social media channels: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

Read more: [60th anniversary celebration](#) and [#Maailmanvaihto60 – Let's make our 60 years visible together!](#)

ICYE Colombia: Multiplier Training on Intercultural Learning

La Vega, Cundinamarca, 7-8 July 2018



ICYE Colombia is a partner in the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project "Skills and Competences for a Global World" centrally coordinated by the ICYE International Office, which comprised an international Training for Trainers on Intercultural Learning in Bali, Indonesia in March 2018. ICYE Colombia held a training for its co-workers and members in order to create a multiplier effect and spread the information, knowledge, practices and experiences gained in the Training for Trainers.

The training took place in La Vega, Cundinamarca on 7th and 8th July and comprised 17 participants. The main objective was to train local co-workers to understand and impart the intercultural learning dimension towards fostering solidarity and the values of human rights to the young volunteers hosted and sent abroad by ICYE Colombia.

An outcome of the training will be a final report serving as training manual in Spanish, which can be used by relevant ICYE National Committees.



International Youth Day



August 12, 2018

This year, the United Nations theme for the Day is **“Safe Spaces for Youth”**. The theme aims to promote youth engagement and empowerment by exploring the role of safe spaces in contributing to freedom of expression, mutual respect and constructive dialogue.

Youth often lack the spaces to meet, interact and socialize outside their home environment. Having a space that feels safe can empower both rural and urban youth by providing an opportunity to gather and participate in activities that promote meaningful dialogues, self-esteem and peace.

With a rise in social and economic inequalities, climate change, political and humanitarian crisis, youth often lack safe spaces. Online communication such as social media has created a new opportunity for youth to engage and use their creativity to create both virtual and physical spaces.

The official commemorative event to celebrate International Youth Day 2018 will take place on Friday 10 August 2018 in UN Habitat in Nairobi, Kenya. [Learn more about the International Youth Day 2018](#). Watch the video: https://youtu.be/cXl6_J-BifM!



Beyond 2030: Youth Taking Charge of the Environment

“The consequences of failing to sensibly and effectively manage the environment are profound and far-reaching”- Antonio Guterres (2017)

[World Environment Day](#) is commemorated each year on June 5th. The theme for 2018, [#BeatPlasticPollution](#), is a reminder of how plastic pollution permeates every aspect of our lives, but also highlights the importance of environmental care, protection and conservation. The fact that plastic pollution has detrimental health, social and economic effects compels us to think innovatively about how to address it. With today’s youth population (15-24 years) at 1.2 billion and further growth anticipated for the near future, investments in youth must be channeled to enable them to adopt sustainable methods for environmental protection. More than ever before there is a need to start early by imparting awareness and a sense of environmental stewardship among the youth of today and future generations. Read more facts about plastic pollution [here](#) . [Read more](#).



Diversity – Never enough!

17-25 March – European Action Week Against Racism
2018

The [UNITED for Intercultural Action](#) **European Action Week Against Racism 2018** aimed at raising awareness on the issue of discrimination and to promoting diversity in Europe is over. More than 200 activities have been reported and added to [UNITED Interactive Map](#). More than 300.000 people were reached on Facebook and more than 50.000 people have been reached on Twitter with our online campaign, while around 300 organisations have been personally contacted and encouraged to take part in the movement. We have managed TOGETHER to prove that diversity is beautiful and valuable, that there can be never enough of it.

[Read more.](#)



UNITED Campaign "Fatal Policies of Fortress Europe": No More Deaths - Time for Change!

[UNITED](#) has updated its [List of Refugee Deaths](#) on the occasion of the International Refugee Day on 20 June, a list that now records 34,361 deaths which are a direct result of the fatal policies of Fortress Europe. The List of Deaths has been published by The Guardian in its print and [online edition](#) and [Il Manifesto](#) newspaper in Italy.