



# Worlds of Experience

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## Skills and Competences for a Global World

Dear friends,

There is growing interest in the potential of international voluntary service to foster international understanding between peoples and nations and to promote global citizenship, intercultural learning and cooperation. Studies suggest that international voluntary service develops competences, skills, attitudes, behaviour and networks that prepare volunteers for living and working in a knowledge-based global economy (McBride, Lough, Sherraden, 2010). If we take volunteers as agents of change, then change must inevitably begin with them. The 47<sup>th</sup> issue of the ICYE Federation Newsletter centres on "Skills and Competences for a Global World" and illustrates in the words of young people engaged in international volunteering the skills and competences they have gained through their volunteering.

The theme of the newsletter corresponds to an Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project with the same name - "Skills and Competences for a Global World". In **Volunteers Voices**, we are pleased to present articles by nine current EVS volunteers in this project, who describe their life and work as international volunteers, the experiences that have influenced their lives, and how it is shaping their aspirations, life choices and ambitions. Moving across continents, the articles take us on a captivating journey from Lagos to Vienna, Porto Alegre to Helsinki, Bangalore to Pultusk, Tegucigalpa to Hämeenkoski, and from Nairobi to end in Puerto Carreño. All of them depict challenges and concurrently tremendous learning experiences. In the words of the Colombian volunteer in Poland, volunteering "teaches you more than five years of university, because you are not just acquiring knowledge, you are acquiring abilities and skills that help you grow as a person, which will stick with you until the end".

**ICYE News** feature: the "Young Leaders for Social Change: Entrepreneurship through Volunteering", newly approved Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project that will involve 13 international volunteers in campaigns/actions to tackle social issues, create economic opportunities and alternative approaches to employability; the self-defence class for volunteers in Quito, organised by VASE/ICYE Ecuador; the "Autumn Festival: Act Locally - Impact Globally" organised in Hanoi, Vietnam, by UNDP and CSDS (Centre for Sustainable Development Studies) to celebrate the third anniversary of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and the "International Conference on Transformative Volunteering: Challenges and Impact", attended by ICYE Colombia and organised by ACJ-YMCA, in Bogotá.

Wishing you an interesting reading, we look forward to receiving articles and pictures for the next issue of "Worlds of Experience", dedicated to "What drives YOU to volunteer?". Please send your contributions to [icye@icye.org](mailto:icye@icye.org), before 31 January 2019.

Warmest regards!

**ICYE International Office**

This and previous issues of "Worlds of Experience" can be viewed and downloaded from: [www.icye.org](http://www.icye.org).

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# Volunteers Voices

## Everyday Lagos

**Małgorzata Głogowska (Poland)**

EVS volunteer in Nigeria

Traveling is very important to me. Since I was 18 years old, I spent at least 3 months every year in other countries. Talking long hours with lorry drivers while hitchhiking in Europe. Wandering through villages in the Moroccan Atlas Mountains. Spending hours on benches in Spanish parks talking with old men. Or discovering vibrant nightlife with younger ones in Tel Aviv. Traveling means looking for knowledge about my greater passion - human beings. Exposing myself to different cultures, becoming more aware of myself in individual and global contexts. It's simply how I grow up.



I decided to participate in this program because I had to assure myself that I am making a good decision about my career path. I wanted to combine my love for travels and exploring places, contact with other people and cultures, interest in global politics and social development and passion for media, communication and journalism. And a little bit to prove myself, that I can become friends with everyone. No matter how "different" we seem to be. But I can't talk about my volunteering experience without mentioning Lagos. Probably the biggest city in Africa. Probably? Yes. There is no solid data. Estimated population of Lagos is at 17.5 million (Lagos State Government), 22 million (UN Statistics Division) or 30 million (Lagos gossips). What's more there is about 2000 new citizens every day. I think the word that describes Lagos the best is an "anxious" and synonym for lagosian should be a "hustler". This city is challenging. Always buzzing, loud, chaotic and it is an absolutely fascinating place.

I came to Nigeria to discover more about work in the social development sector and how I can participate in it. Action Health Incorporated (AHI), my hosting organisation is an NGO focused on sexual and reproductive health in Nigeria. I read about their work and I really wanted to learn from them. Happily, they give me a lot of freedom when it comes to work and projects I Am involved in. I just had to be proactive and show initiative. So I started with one of their biggest projects and I was supporting program officers. I became Excel Master handling our database and "Our oyinbo" (word for fair skin people in Yoruba, Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin) during fieldwork with facilitators or community sensitization meetings.

Afterwards, together with people from 9 African countries, I had a chance to participate in Sexual Leadership Development Fellowship designed for policymakers, program officers and leaders in the field of sexuality in Africa. That was intense two weeks when I learnt a lot about sexual and reproductive health issues and policies (not only in the African context). I am also participating in the whole process of organising Teenage Festival of Life. From seeking funds, through logistics to promotion, I am making sure that during this event young people have everything they need to advocate for their rights.

Lately, together with our nurse, I conducted two-week workshops about photography, video and visual story telling which ended with outstanding works made by our 20 girls. It was one of the most intense and emotional moments during my time here and it helped me to make a decision about how I want to develop my career path. Discovering that "normal people" stories are so strong and exceptional is absolutely fascinating. I also think it's really important and needed in today's world.

One of the things I appreciate the most are conversations. Fact, that I could spend so much time here exposed me to different people and different perspectives. I can understand better why people decide to migrate from their countries. I have more realistic perspective of poverty. Slum is not a strange and dangerous place to me anymore. Social and economical inequalities have faces of both rich and poor with their reasons, decisions, views and stories. Global economic dependencies are stronger and more visible than in any other place I visited. Environmental change and pollution are more visible than in Europe. And Sub-Saharan Africa isn't only this place with beautiful landscape and about 41% of population living under International Poverty Line 1.90\$ (The World Bank).

Lagos showed me a different face of Africa. Not the one from news, nor from non-fiction books or even reports. But a more complex one. With a very lively alternative culture, great art scene deriving both from a rich cultural heritage and western culture. An energetic start-up hub

and... normal, everyday life. Being here, observing and participating in Lagos' life, working at AHI is the best thing I could do with my time. Both for my personal and professional path. I am grateful I had a chance to do that. It's hard to describe this enriching experience in a small article because I know it influences me in every aspect of my life. I also can't say it is an easy experience - Nigeria's mix of cultures is very far from everything I knew before. Almost everyday I come across a new, smaller or bigger, challenge. But I proved myself that every time I am able to find a lesson in difficulties and joy in differences. I realized that I am very good with intercultural and interpersonal communication. And I know that after living in Lagos for 6 months I am ready for everything.

## One Step Ahead to Wonderful Journey

**Putri Anggraeni (Indonesia)**  
EVS volunteer in Austria

Leaving my country for the first time was one of the biggest decisions I've ever made in life. Yet by the time, I realized that it was the best opportunity that ever came to me. I've been in several voluntary projects before, but to be a volunteer abroad with all brand new people! This is the first time I dared myself to take on the challenge.

My first time as a volunteer was unexpected. It was when I had to force myself to be more independent, ignore homesickness, and adapt to the new circumstances at the same time. I felt it was so hard but then it made me realize that I could beat the challenges and went through it. I feel more confident and could not believe that I finally beat my fear of leaving my country and starting this wonderful journey. The other challenge is that I am working with people with disabilities, which I've never experienced before, and I did not know the language, which gave me no idea about what I supposed to do. Lucky me, I have a lot of people from my hosting organisation and my hosting project who are always there to help me anytime I need them. I started gaining skills to work in this area, joining German classes, acquiring new a language, and getting to know the people I'm working with. I realize that they are such lovely and inspiring people. They taught me that no matter who we are, we deserve the same rights, love, happiness, and even sometimes they are also the funniest people I've ever met. From these people, I learn how to be more creative and proactive in every project we have had so that I could learn something new from them and vice versa.

Being here in Austria and being in touch with the culture directly gave me more of an understanding of diversity and more open-minded thoughts as well. That culture is not only what we see outside, but also what is deep

down inside; it is not only about how people are dressed, but also about attitudes, moral values, and even manners toward others. Of course, it is completely different from the culture in my home country, but it doesn't mean that it's bad. On the contrary, I could see more things from another perspective, and gain more of an understanding about them. It changed how I see the world, that sometimes we just have to see and listen more before putting a label on someone or something we don't know yet.



During my time here, I also joined some seminars and training where I met more inspiring and great people. I met other volunteers from around the world and made connections with them. We shared experiences and inspired each other. From my hosting organisation, I have incredible mentors who are more than capable of helping and handling the program I am working on right now. They taught me that there's always a result in hard work, even the small ones. And at my hosting project, there are so many people that work with their full heart and passion, which makes me brave about giving up my dreams of my future career and life goals. From them I learn that whatever I am going to do in the future, I just have to make sure that it is fully from my heart and passion. I could be whatever I want as long as I am not giving up on it and keep up the hard work. I do not have to change the world to be a great person, but I can make a good difference that affects others to make one as well.

## Teaching and learning on the other side of the world

**Susanna Elkevaara (Finland)**  
EVS volunteer in Brazil

When I arrived, everything felt so weird and unbelievable, like a dream. Everything was new, different and bigger. The streets, buildings, people. The first week, I just got to know about Brazil, my new host family and the neighbourhood. I was so excited.



# Volunteers Voices

In the very first weeks, I already noticed many things from myself. I have always being an open-minded person but when I came here I realized how useful a trait it really is, because for me everything was new and weird but for others it was just normal life. All the new food, public transport, strange language, people's behaviour and a whole new culture. But, at the same time, I learned how to trust myself more than ever.

Then I got to know my host project. I had many visions in my head about how it is going to look, but it exceeded all my wishes. The place was so beautiful, well organized and full of happy people. I was a little bit afraid that it is going to take some time before I could fit into the group, but even though we had no common language, I immediately felt welcomed. Kids and teachers came to hug me and that was the moment when I learned something else about myself; not to be afraid about the things you don't know, about how they are going to turn out, particularly if you can do nothing about them before trying them.



The kids also taught me a lot. The main thing is Portuguese. I have been studying it too, but I received the best lessons from them. They are so patient and that is also something that has become so much stronger in me, being patient. Everything comes at the right time. But I also learned many practically things from them, new ways to recycle and how to be creative with your old "useless" stuff.

Usually when I am travelling, I almost never get homesick. I was halfway on my trip and it hit me, I miss home. It was weird for me because it has never happened before and there was no way to fix it. I just needed to fix my thoughts and attitude. I think that was when I learned the most. Not giving up, believing in myself and trusting that it will be worth it. And it totally was! The times I missed home, I got most of my energy from the kids. They were always so happy when I taught them something new, or just talked and played with them. This whole thing put me on the next level with self-confidence and trusting myself.

Then I changed my host family, and they gave me some new energy too. They were like exactly my family back in home. It felt so nice and comforting. Right away, I was a part of the family. They are such a helpful, caring family and I have so much respect for them. After changing the family, I felt like a new person again. Of course there was still lot of learning about their culture and lots of things were different, but I think that was so great. It kept me going, learning new words, foods, habits, places, everything all the time. Sometimes I was frustrated about getting lost or not knowing the language, but at the end of the day, I always went to sleep with a big smile on my face because I did it, I found my way or the right words. There is no such feeling than the one when you do something that you think you are unable to do. There is the self-confidence again.

I would say that the biggest thing that is going to stay on in my mind from this journey is that the people are very different, every one of them is different, but at the same time, we are all the same. Being a volunteer has taught me that sometimes the best reward is to get someone to smile. Being the one who guides others. Trusting yourself is extremely important too. Also, if you don't know what to do, to say or where to go - smile, it always helps.

## Discovering new things in Finland

**Kirandeep Kaur (India)**

EVS volunteer in Finland



It was 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2018. I was traveling to Finland for my EVS volunteering period with some excitement and nervousness. I had never visited Europe before, so I was unaware of the weather and cultural differences. I

understood that I would be alone in a different country with different kinds of people and I felt a little scared. When I arrived, I got as a host family a woman who lives alone. In the beginning, I did not dare to go outside my house alone, but my host mother supported me: she went with me, which made me feel safer. Eventually I dared to go out alone and gained courage to walk with confidence without worrying about anything and to use different means of transportation. After two weeks in Finland, I already felt like I had gained self-confidence.



I volunteer in an arts and crafts workshop for adults with learning disabilities. I support the participants of the workshop in making textiles and art crafts. I like my voluntary work place. The people here have helped me to discover new things. As my profession is nursing, I had experience in working with people with disabilities, but I was surprised at how creative they can be. The participants of the workshop make many different kinds of beautiful art works, and every time I learn to do this with them, I feel comfortable. Working with them makes me feel joy.

It is my first experience volunteering in a different country; its weather, the country and its languages, people and food have felt very different to me. For instance, in India, food is spicy and here in Finland it is not. However, every day I have tried to eat some Finnish food and I have learned to like it – even though my favourite food here is falafel. I have always been ready to try new things even though they would sometimes turn out to be very wrong for me. This has been inspiring for me. For example, when I first went out with my host mother and tried to eat Finnish food, it looked tasty but when I tried it, I did not like the taste. Now, I find the food very tasty. I mostly like different types of vegetarian Finnish food because I am a vegetarian.

The Finnish language has been a big challenge for me. In the beginning, it was so difficult to understand it or to say something in Finnish, but my host family, friends, and people from my voluntary work placement have taught me words daily. That is how I have learned to speak a

little bit of Finnish. It is always very good to learn a new language, and for me Finnish sounds very beautiful. Gradually I have discovered that I can speak in Finnish with the people. It made me happy to gain more courage to communicate at my workplace and host family.

I think volunteering in Finland has been a great experience. I am so happy to have had the chance to live here. I will never forget these sweet memories and nice people. The people I have met have always been very kind and have always helped me whenever I have needed help. That is why I respect and love Finland and the people who live here.

## A Unique Place to Call Home

**Joanna Dziwisz (Poland)**

EVS volunteer in India

Being an EVS Volunteer is not only living in another country and meeting new people, but also a great journey to know yourself better. When I was packing my luggage and later saying goodbye to my family and friends, I could not imagine that a few months in India would change my life from inside out. I strongly believed that my decision to accept the challenge to be an EVS volunteer in Ananya Trust, an organisation that is taking care of underprivileged children through non-formal education was the best decision I ever made and the best investment. Now, after 5 months, I can easily observe how many new things I have learnt and the changes I experienced in my personal and professional development.

My project is a residential one, where during the week you are living together with 60 kids on a campus. Sometimes it is overwhelming and causes a lot of frustration and stress, but as soon as you see the smile on their faces, you realise how lucky you are, and all the negatives effects go away. Living together gave me also a huge opportunity to understand their life stories, cultural differences and managing and solving problems in a different way. Working and teaching in Ananya is truly one of the most heart-warming and enjoyable opportunities of my life. The kids are so eager to learn and find out new information about the world, my country and India, which made it interesting for me to provide them with knowledge and education and my experience. During classes, it is not only about me teaching them, but also about teaching each other and doing things together as a family.

I also started to run regularly with the kids, which is a part of their daily routine. For the first time in my life, I participated in running a Marathon, and after preparing myself with the kids for only 3 months, I was able to run 10km. It was a great experience, where I could challenge myself and overcome my weakness.

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I have learned a lot during these past months: giving classes and workshops, speaking in public, making new friends, catching new opportunities, travelling to new places and in a different way, learning Indian languages. I have built a life that will be difficult to leave behind. Even if in front of me there are still a few more months to be in India and explore this intriguing country, I can already tell that: the most beautiful thing in this project and the biggest lesson is that, these kids give you what is most valuable for them, which is their love.

## A Time to Get to Know Yourself

**Sergio Perez Hernandez (Colombia)**

EVS volunteer in Poland

During this experience, you face situations that challenge you to overcome fears, challenge your confidence and even your identity. This experience is a process that requires a lot of patience and understanding to be able to learn and gain something that will last. But I guess that in order to get to that point, the first thing that we need to do is to know ourselves and know where we come from. To face any kind of problem that comes our way, the values that we acquire in our childhood and all the roots that we grew with during that time will be always our 'first aid kit'. In order to understand other cultures and help others, in my opinion what is really important is to know yourself but be open to learn, to adapt and even to change.

When I landed in Poland, I didn't know a word of polish and when I arrived to work at the school they didn't speak English, so the challenge had begun... It was not just for me but also for the people I was working with, trying to understand each other using signs or online tools. I was taking polish lessons, but polish is not an easy language, so patience was essential on both sides. I don't consider myself an artistic person, but I discovered creativity that I did not know I had, creative ways to express myself and to be able to communicate with the kids.

I like to think of myself as a team player. I know how to work with groups, but something what is quite important in a group is listening to each other, something that was really difficult (not to say impossible) because we did not speak the same language. I was listening but I was not understanding what they were saying, so during the first months, I was just following what I was told to do and I felt that I was not making any difference with the kids or the teachers. So I reached a point where I had to ask myself if that was how I wanted to spend my volunteering time, as someone who is not making an impact. Or if I wanted to be remembered as someone who was actually a part of the school, which of course implied that I would need to work harder and push myself to be that person. So I did it, I pushed myself, I don't speak polish –that's a fact– but I can understand and others can understand me, and I know that kids will remember me after I leave.

Another part of my job is at the office of my organisation, where communication was not a problem, but my background is academic and maybe a little "old school", so planning activities for our events was very different for me, but as I said before, I found creativity that I did not know about. But I think that I actually learn more at the office, I learned to listen, to share different points of view and to find a common ground to work as smoothly as possible.

I still have some time before my project ends, but at this point, I can say that I am satisfied with what I have learned and gained. Being part of a volunteer program somehow teaches you more than five years of university, because you are not just acquiring knowledge, you are acquiring abilities and skills that help you grow as a person, which will stick with you until the end.





## Transforming into a Citizen of the World

**Monika Kováčová (Slovakia)**

EVS volunteer in Honduras

Living abroad was always a dream of mine. I am a crazy dreamer and with an insatiable desire for travel and adventure who could never settle for an ordinary life or conform to the norm. I believe that travel is so much more than simply seeing the sights – that travel, and the things you learn from it, can really change your life. Being a volunteer has become a way to travel with a purpose. But more important than the sights I've seen, is the change that has occurred in me. I know it sounds like a cliché but it is true – Volunteering really has changed my life! It has made me happier, less stressed and more confident, I've learned new skills, made more friends that I can count and most important of all, I learned that the world is not a scary place, that people all over are inherently kind and I am constantly overwhelmed at the kindness of strangers.

The world has become very judgmental, even more toward the community of people that has intellectual disabilities. At least 65% of the population still does not understand the causes, way of life and/or even fear someone who has Down Syndrome. Shortly after I got to El Arca, I realized that I made the right choice. Six months and counting, I have had so many life changing experiences and memories for years to come.

For many months now, I have worked with (as I called them) "my children". Many of my activities involve critical thinking and leadership as my children depend on me. Working in conjunction with my co-workers and other volunteers like David, we make it a fun and enjoyable place for my children. Many aspects of my work at El Arca with my children includes: teaching them to be more independent, problem solving, playing, singing, dancing, watching movies and talking with them just to name a few. Nonetheless, the work can be challenging at times when situations can get out of control. I have won the confidence of the director and my teammates to the point that they ask for my opinion and my ideas. My interaction with my children is normal, as if they do not have any disabilities.

My life in Honduras, especially with my host family was an adventure all-in-it by itself. A typical Honduran family is very religious and care for each other. I feel I am a part of their family, they make me feel at home; such welcoming cannot not be found as per my experiences in the EU. I learned to be independent since my early years, but when I am with them I feel that they do not give me independence and maybe this is because they don't want me to have a bad experience. The country has a wave of gang related incidents and other security concerns. Looking over my shoulder and my belongings is a normal

way of life here in Honduras. The country has beautiful sights; many people love to be and live in the nature and like the outdoor lifestyle but there is a problem... Trash! It is everywhere. I have never seen so much trash on the streets, people toss their trash wherever they please, it seems so natural do this. Despite all these things and many others, the truth is that, I fell in love with Honduras. Honduras has a special place in my heart. The beauty, the culture, the lifestyle and the unknown, makes me want/know/see more. I would even say to have a "dream life" living here... Only if you simply respect and follow the unspoken rules.



After all this time, my Spanish got much better. Honduras offers very low support in the sports. So I thought there was no BMX community, but to my surprise the BMX community is alive and very strong. I also met a group of climbers, which I attend regularly. Getting the hang of moving around the city, either by bus, taxi or even just to go to the store to get something to eat was at first a challenge, but now I can say that I can easily do all these things by myself. There are also a number of personal narratives about issues I face when travelling. From a lack of self-confidence, fears, struggles with language, saying goodbye and even falling in love. They are all hot topics for a solo traveller and there are no holds barred when it comes to writing about it. Sadly, soon I will end my time here in Honduras. First, I thought when I finished my volunteering here in Honduras, I would return to Slovakia

# Volunteers Voices

to live a "normal life" but now I can honestly say I do not want that. I now see many opportunities for things I would like to do because everything that we want in life is possible. I leave you with one of my favourite quotes: "Travel isn't always pretty. It isn't always comfortable. Sometimes it hurts, it even breaks your heart. But that's okay. The journey changes you; it should change you. It leaves marks on your memory, on your consciousness, on your heart, and on your body. You take something with you. Hopefully, you leave something good behind." Anthony Bourdain.

## Learning in a village community

**Vilma Martínez (Honduras)**

EVS volunteer in Finland

My name is Vilma Martínez. I am from the department of Intibucá, Honduras. My stay in Finland as a volunteer is wonderful. I volunteer in Myllylähde, a village community of adults with special needs. My work consists mostly of supporting the villagers, but also performing tasks in several other areas, such as biodynamic agriculture, in which together with the villagers I harvest berries, fruits and vegetables that we have sowed. We clean, sort and pack them for storage. Berries, fruits and vegetables such as cranberries, strawberries, plums, apples, potatoes, onions, beetroots, carrots and green beans.

In the weavers' workshop of the community, I learnt to make table runners, tablecloths with felt balls and to create flowers out of leaves. I also participated here in activities such as the choir, eurhythmy, painting and Finnish courses.



Myllylähde gives people with special needs an opportunity to participate effectively in the life of the community by letting them develop their abilities and skills by producing, sharing and living together in a fraternal community. Myllylähde has given me a chance to develop my abilities to support people with special needs. I think that volunteering here requires and has offered me a chance to develop further, teamwork skills as well as skills to learn, help, teach and lead group work. I have also developed further my organisational skills as well as different ways of working that help to improve the quality of the work.

I have travelled to and discovered another country with a totally different language. I have participated in two trainings in which I have lived together with volunteers from different countries and shared experiences with them. International volunteering with learning a new language and meeting people from different cultural backgrounds has given me the opportunity to expand my knowledge, which in the future might help me in finding an enjoyable job.

Volunteering here makes me grow day by day as a human and professionally as well. It is my ambition to keep expanding my knowledge by travelling and discovering other cultures, and to find an inspiring job where I can use my abilities. It is my aspiration to help my family and continue volunteering to make societies better.

As a volunteer, I have realised that helping others is actually helping oneself. It has allowed me to see my life in a new way. What is evident in many ways is a distinct before and after period in voluntary service because voluntary work is full of new learning experiences, which start the moment you decide to place yourself at the service of others.

## How I discovered African Joy

**Cathrine Marstrand Loyanae (Denmark)**

EVS volunteer in Kenya

Time is approaching 8 and it is time for me to leave for work. I pick up my phone and call my motorbike guy, who drives me every morning to the main road, where I can catch a Matatu, a bus. The buses in Kenya look like they have been in an episode of "Pimp my ride" and have loud music and sometimes a screen showing the music video of the song that is playing.

I arrive at Missionary of Charity Langata Home. My work is at an orphanage for children with mental and/or physical disabilities. It is run by Catholic Sisters who are working and training as per the spirit and vision of Mother Teresa. This means that some 30-40 Sisters, pre-aspirants and aspirants live there, taking care of the



children, going for prayers and attending the life as a Nun. The children have many challenges and need practical help with e-v-e-r-y-t-h-i-n-g. I still remember the first time I stepped into the main room, where the children were seated during the day. To be honest, I was shocked with a big round mouth open. I had never before in my life been near or worked with people with disabilities. The only one I ever have met was a guy in a wheelchair in my primary school who was one year above me. But he could talk and, as I remember him, only looked different.



At the Missionary of Charity there was a whole room full of them, many making a lot of noise, screaming, drooling. This was just a first impression, I discovered . . . . I start the day by greeting all of the children. The ones who register that I am present greet me back happily. I then go to my work station: washing laundry. Here in Kenya it is unusual to see a washing machine, so everything is done by hand. It requires a lot of work keeping clothes, sheets and blankets clean for 53 children. Luckily, the Sisters have hired workers, who we call Mamas, because every Mama is responsible for taking care of 3 children as their own. The Mamas are the most hilarious and happy adults I have met in my life. They joke around, tell a lot of stories (while carrying out our work), love singing and dancing and they all treat me as a long lost daughter. They are all just real Kenyan Mamas. Their work is to care for their children: wash them, feed them, dress them, and take them to the toilet (and change their clothes if this happened too late or isn't practically possible). I assist with all of these things, but mostly at the laundry station.

So every morning I hang the washed bedsheets, blankets and clothes on lines for drying. After that, I wash the floor by sweeping and wiping it, real African style. This means bending from the waist to reach the floor with a hand broom made from reeds and wiping with an old towel, using your hands. After finishing at the laundry station, I usually go to the physiotherapist room, where I assist the

woman we call "doktori", which is doctor in Kiswahili. I accompany the children that are in the doktaris room that day to carry out specific exercise assignments to help develop and train their hands or to train walking. On other days, I help in the kitchen mostly cutting food, because the children have a difficult time chewing and swallowing, so we have to cut everything into small pieces. The rest of the day I spend with the children talking, dancing or making some jewellery with beads. In the afternoon I help folding the dry sheets and blankets and separate them into the different rooms and then make all 52 beds ready. All beds have clean bedding each day. At 11 am and 4 pm it is time for feeding the children. Many of them are not able to hold a spoon and eat on their own. At the start, it was very challenging for me to feed a child because food often falls out of the child's mouth or some are easily choking and have to cough it up again. But I just said to myself, you are going to be here for 8 months, so you might as well just get used to it. Then along the way it became easier. You get to know every child, each one of them becomes your friend and you know their needs, their challenges and how they eat. Now, I don't even register that they are disabled. They are just my friends and I care a lot about them.

Coming to Kenya and being an international volunteer has really given me a lot of new and valuable experience. Not only learning that people are people, whether disabled or not, but also through cooperating with colleagues within the context of their culture abiding their values as well as my own. I have learned to communicate despite not having all the words in Kiswahili and using body language. Working alongside these wonderful African Mamas and feel admitted in their atmosphere of positive and empathetic approach is such a privilege.

This is I outside a local NGO that I was visiting in Lodwar, Northern Kenya. The NGO is run by Turkana women who grew up in the same society and today are successful career women. They help girls and young women, motivating them to pursue an education and be less socio-economically vulnerable. Also, they share their own stories and encourage Turkana women to take up a voice in society.

## Young Leaders for Social Change: Entrepreneurship through Volunteering



The new Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project “Young Leaders for Social Change: Entrepreneurship through Volunteering”, centrally coordinated by the ICYE International Office, has been approved by the European Commission.

The project aims to promote creativity and a sense of initiative in young people in order to empower social entrepreneurship for collective community growth - in keeping with the values of youth voluntary work (solidarity, civic spirit, cooperation, and respect for human dignity). Volunteers in the project will lead or be closely involved in campaigns or actions that tackle social issues, create economic opportunities and alternative approaches to employability.

The main activities of the project comprise an international social entrepreneurship workshop in Buenos Aires, Argentina in March 2019, followed by volunteering activities for 13 young people from countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. Participating countries include Austria, Finland, Iceland, Poland, Slovakia, UK, South Africa, Nigeria, Philippines, Vietnam, Honduras, Ecuador and Argentina.



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## Self-defence class for volunteers in Quito, Ecuador VASE – ICYE Ecuador

What do you do if someone grabs you from behind? How do you react to unwanted contacts? Which techniques are quick and easy to apply in self-defense?

These questions and more were dealt with during the self-defense class organized by VASE – ICYE Ecuador for its international volunteers who arrived in the country in August 2018. A couple of days after their arrival, all 35 volunteers and two staff members of VASE attended the 5-hour seminar on self-defense at the martial arts school of Roberto Almagro, 7th Dan in American Kenpo, carried out in Quito on the 11th of August 2018.

The martial arts school has been teaching children, adolescents and adults for 8 years now and the martial arts master Roberto Almagro does not only want to teach self-defense techniques, also but strengthens his student's self-confidence and personal development. Some volunteers already had certain ideas of what to expect of this class, some already practiced a little bit of self-defense and others were a little anxious about what to expect.



The class started with theory. It was talked about personal attacks that happened in the park or in the bus, how to react in critical situations and the importance of self-defense in our daily life. After a little warm up, the volunteers could practice some techniques in pairs. Simple but effective techniques were practiced, e.g. how to free yourself from double handgrip, how to react if someone pulls your hair, and which techniques are best to apply when you are already lying on the floor.

Daniel from Germany was excited that he had the chance to participate in this self-defense class. "I found it very interesting to learn different techniques and being able to apply them during the class, but I hope that I never have to apply it in real life though."

The mixture of physical training, techniques and theory made this class an intense but successful self-defense training unit. VASE also felt that it could give volunteers more self-confidence and the awareness of all that could happen, and how it could be prevented.

## Autumn Festival: Act Locally - Impact Globally

Volunteer for Peace Vietnam – ICYE Vietnam

On 23 September 2018, VPV (Volunteer for Peace Vietnam) - ICYE Vietnam joined with hundreds of young people in Hanoi for the special event “Autumn Festival: Act Locally - Impact Globally” organised by UNDP and CSDS (Centre for Sustainable Development Studies) to celebrate the third anniversary of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promote youth active engagement in the development process.

A wide range of activities that took place at the Autumn Festival on 23<sup>rd</sup> September to involve and empower Vietnamese youth to act toward the Sustainable Development Goals. Exhibitions of youth projects on community development, market fairs to promote sustainable lifestyles, elevator challenges to solve local community problems, youth initiative awards for outstanding young people actively working on SDGs were among the activities during the Autumn Festival. CSDS worked closely with UNDP Vietnam, UN Women and Vietnamese ASEAN MY World advocates to celebrate the day.

The festival aimed to honour, encourage and promote positive contributions for the community in order to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and bring these goals closer to the public, encourage all members of society to work together for sustainable development since every small contribution can cause big changes to the global picture. VPV - ICYE Vietnam introduced to the young audience various international volunteering projects around the world that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.



## International Conference on Transformative Volunteering: Challenges and Impact

ICYE Colombia

On 4th and 5th October, ICYE Colombia staff, co-workers and volunteers actively participated in the “*Conferencia Internacional de Voluntariado Transformador: Retos e Impactos*”, an international event promoted by ACJ-YMCA, in its offices in Bogotá.

The International Conference on Transformative Volunteering: Impacts and Challenges aimed to analyse and examine the impacts of volunteers in Colombia on the Sustainable Development Goals. The conference comprised managers, officials and collaborators of the private and business sector, the academic sector, volunteering organizations, and entities with voluntary action of national and international order and civil society, was enriched with the participation of personalities such as Senator Antanas Mockus, Executive Director of the Bolívar Davivienda Foundation, Fernando Cortés, Vice President of Social Responsibility of the Bolívar Group, Jacobo Quintero, Director of the Conflicto International Consulting Group Foundation, and Luz Ángela Ramírez, Technical Coordinator of the Colombian NGO Confederation, among other experts and researchers.



The conference was an important opportunity to deepen the concept of “Transformative Volunteering” understood as the ability to generate positive changes in the environment, which implies a critical understanding of reality and the political decision to assume a responsible citizenship.

ICYE Colombia was part of the panel of experts together with the former volunteer Cristian Hilarión, who shared the importance of his volunteering experience in Poland through the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission, *European Voluntary Service*.

ICYE Colombia staff, co-workers, 3 volunteers from Germany and one from Italy also participated in six different thematic tables focusing on the areas: Education, Environment, Peace, Gender Equality, Decent Work, Experiences of Youth Volunteering in Colombia, learning from the exchange of good practices and sharing their own experiences and expertise.