

# WORLDS OF EXPERIENCE

49th Issue - Anniversary Special

## BEST OF ICYE

Dear friends,

2019 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ICYE. To celebrate this milestone, we are delighted to present this special anniversary issue, "Best of ICYE", which carries fifteen of the best articles by ICYE volunteers published in our newsletters from the very first

issues in 2003 to

the latest ones in 2019. It has been inspiring to go through 48 issues of the ICYE Federation newsletters and gain tremendous insight into the motivations, experiences and learning of the participants of our programmes. As enriching as the process has been, it made it a challenging endeavour to select fifteen from over 250 articles published over 17 years.

The articles in this issue cover a range of themes from the environment, HIV/AIDS, anti-racism, music, children, the elderly, etc. and are set in or written by former volunteers from just as wide a range of countries in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Americas.

In this anniversary issue, we also take the opportunity to present the key findings of a very recent qualitative study testing the impact of long-term international volunteering on the volunteers of the Erasmus+ project *Skills and Competences for a Global World*. We also illustrate the process of learning and change that young people undergo when participating in our volunteering programmes and share with you the recognition received from the European Commission on a recent project.

We wish you interesting reading and hope this special issue provides an insight into ICYE's volunteering programmes, our work and development over the past 40 years which started with two National Committee in 1949 and has peaked at 40 in 2019.

Warm 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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## Pretty Woman

Kathryn H. (UK), volunteer in the Ukraine

Published in *HIV/AIDS and YOUTH*, Issue No.2, May 2003

I don't think there is any need to ask if you have seen the film 'Pretty Woman'. Of course 'Pretty Woman' was a modern fairy tale, an enchanting fiction. But how many of us had our understanding of prostitution influenced by the images in this film? Do you remember Julia Roberts' first attempt to work as a prostitute, when she mistakenly takes up her position on a seasoned prostitute's 'patch'? For many of us this scene and the images of streetwise women in miniskirts and micro tops parading for business somehow seemed a believable reality.

However, this is not the real face of prostitution as I found out for myself when I participated in the Harm Reduction HIV/AIDS Outreach project for the female sex worker population here in Odessa, Ukraine. Alongside Mariya, a sociologist from the organisation 'Faith, Hope, Love,' I went one freezing January evening to the city's port. Armed with condoms, leaflets advising about safe sex and the organisations' monthly magazine for female sex workers and drug users, our task was to talk with the women and distribute our materials. The female sex workers were an unremarkable group of approximately twenty women located opposite the port entrance and outside a small shop. They were of mixed age, the majority of them were obviously in their early twenties and they were dressed for the weather – in trousers and winter coats. I was surprised because they did not match my idea of a prostitute; they looked like 'normal' people. Mariya informed me that a significant number of them were new, and that many of

them were university students from Odessa region or other parts of Ukraine. I had become so de-sensitised to the term "female sex worker" that when I actually met them it was a shock to recognise that they were not merely women who sold sex but women with other priorities in their lives. They were happy, laughing and joking and trying to speak English. I could not understand why they chose to do this work.

The sex workers recognised Mariya and were happy to talk with her. This is because the organisation conducts outreach at the same location regularly on Tuesday and Friday evenings. It quickly became clear to me that this outreach work was very important to the female sex workers. The condoms were eagerly received, as were our leaflets. The magazine was also very popular and I was pleasantly surprised that there was so much demand for it. Having spent many long, dull hours in the office folding and stapling the pages, it was rewarding to see that this work was appreciated. We stayed for no more than half an hour because there were not a great number of women working there that evening. The previous Tuesday evening, Mariya and her colleague had counted approximately thirty-five women, and in the summer months there can be as many as eighty. As for clients,

I did not notice many, although at one point I saw a stream of female sex workers heading towards a newly parked car. I am informed that the large number of sex workers in one location is good for the client. If he wishes, he can ask the women to turn around so that he can see their profiles, or if he likes he can ask them to show him their legs or rear. He has plenty of choice.

The statistics tell us why this outreach work is so important. There is an HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ukraine - 1% of the population is infected with HIV/AIDS (compare this with Britain's 0.1%). In Odessa, a city of approximately 1 million, 13,000 people are known to have HIV/AIDS but the World Health Organisation recommends that the reality is nearer eight or ten times this number. Female sex workers are one of the highest risk groups for HIV/AIDS and without the work of 'Faith, Hope, Love' in both Harm Reduction and in collecting data about the female sex worker profession in Odessa many more such women are likely to become infected and spread the disease. As I went home to bed that evening, I thought of the women I had just met. What were they doing now? Maybe others had also gone to bed - but in what circumstances, and what would the consequences be? Some, I knew, had just gone to a nearby cafe for a hot drink. It had been a very cold night.

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# The Costa Rican National Zoo “Simón Bolívar”

Berglind Kristajánsdóttir (Iceland), volunteer in Costa Rica

Published in *Youth and the Environment*, Issue No. 6, October 2004



**M**y journey to Costa Rica really started on a particularly dark and cold February morning. The reason why I choose Costa Rica over other places had a lot to do with the fact that it is completely different from my homeland. The humid air smells of spices and flowers and everywhere you look there is life. With its tropical climate and unique location, connecting Central and South America, Costa Rica's level of biodiversity is one of the greatest on the planet. 1150 metres above sea level in the wide and fertile central valley stands the capital, San Jose.

Taking the road north, just a few blocks away from the centre, to my surprise I found yet another green treasure: The Simón Bolívar Zoo, my place of work. I had not exactly been optimistic about the place beforehand. To make a long story short, I

absolutely loved it.

The Simón Bolívar Zoo is placed in a larger park of Simón Bolívar. A river runs through it and in a way it feels more like a forest than a city. It is not just an ordinary zoo; it is also a sanctuary for rescued animals. They do not go looking for animals to capture but give home to animals that lived in bad conditions before. These are mostly animals that have been robbed or lived with people who were keeping the animals illegally in their houses. Others used to belong to a circus or another zoo. Finally, there are our orphans, animals whose mothers have been killed, leaving them all alone in the cruel jungle society.

My work at the zoo is diverse. I take part in preparing the food for the animals, help with feeding them and assist with other daily tasks. In the

afternoon, I take care of Chuvy, the two-toed sloth. He is a chubby two years old who thinks he is a human being, the prince of the zoo. His mother was killed when he was only a few weeks old, and he was found in a trashcan somewhere in the city. In the afternoon, he likes to climb trees, eat and misbehave, but mostly he likes to take naps. Chuvy's favourite food is boiled eggs. He sticks his tongue out and tries to fit the whole thing into his far too small mouth. He also likes to be hugged and falls asleep in my arms if held in the right way.

The days go by so fast here in Costa Rica. Always something new to see, to learn, taste or do. New friends can be made. Every morning, waking up to the warm sun shining in through my window, I feel happy to be exactly where I am, having my ICYE experience.

## A New Point of View – Homeless in Berlin

Wadie Badra (Brazil), volunteer in Germany

Published in *Youth and the Homeless*, Issue No. 7, March 2005



**M**y name is Wadie Badra and I come from Porto Alegre, Brazil. Despite the image that people have of Brazil as a poor country, I live in a region that has a considerable good standard of living. I for one have studied business in a good university, travelled a lot and never cared about social problems.

When I chose to spend a year in Germany, I was in-

terested in parties, new cultures and new languages. Sure all my interests became a reality in my year abroad, but the biggest surprise came from my voluntary work.

I worked in MOB e. V., an organization that helps homeless and marginalised people to start a new life. They have a cheap restaurant, beds for the homeless to spend the night, a second-hand shop where people can buy cheap furniture, rent cheap apartments and a well-known newspaper in Berlin, the *Strassenfeger* / The Street Sweeper.

The newspaper is the main activity and where I got more involved. The marginalised sell it in the subway and earn some money with that. My first surprise was to notice that a lot of people buy the newspaper just to help the homeless, something impossible in Brazil.

Another surprise was the restaurant. In my Brazilian mind, I thought that the restaurant would be something terrible, because in my country it is unthinkable that a social restaurant can cook something decent. What I can say is that I ate there all through the year; I liked the food and never had any problem.

When I examined the beds, I thought they were too comfortable to be

free beds. That's the way my mind worked for half a year, comparing Brazil with Germany. The last thing was how my boss treated me. To explain: I was working in a project that needed fluent German, so at the beginning my contribution was scarce and I was not expecting to be so well treated. But my boss not only asked if I needed something but also gave me a lot of things that I'd never dared to ask for (as a TV); and then I realised that they help people because they want to do it, not because it is their obligation.

With time, I started to worry about the people there, and I became responsible for all the homeless that did not speak German. I enjoyed giving them some support, but sometimes I got disappointed because of their behaviour, having the feeling that some of them did not want to help themselves. One day when a group of Latvian students came to visit the project, I took them around and showed



them how it works, and told them about the German and the Brazilian situation. I was happy that at the end of the visit my boss told me he was proud of my knowledge of the project and Germany's social activities.

Now I'm back in my country and I can say that I've a totally different mind. I participate in a group created by a friend of mine (called the Wednesday's movement) to help children. I took part in the World Social Forum (that takes place in my city) and I read about Brazilian social activities (which I found to be more than I previously expected). I could continue to write more about differences between countries, but I think that that's not the point. The point is that we have to worry about the people that have less than us, regardless of their nationality, age or any other difference.

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gardless of their nationality, age or any other difference.

## Classical Music in India

Marie M. (Germany), volunteer in India

Published in *Youth Volunteering in Arts and Culture*, Issue No.19, July 2009

In four weeks, I have to leave Kalkeri, because my year working as a volunteer in India will be over. I will have to leave the place where I have learned more in one year than in all my life. I learned about myself and got a better vision of how I want my future to be. I learned about other very new things that are now so important to me and that I will take back to Germany and use in my daily life.

One of these things is for sure playing the sitar and my interest in Hindustani classical music in general. The school where I live, the Kalkeri Sangeet Vidyalaya, or Kalkeri Music School, is the perfect place to get to know about this wonderful music. It is a boarding school free of charge for children mainly from economically marginalized families. It has its focus on teaching Hindustani classical music but the academic classes are very important as well.

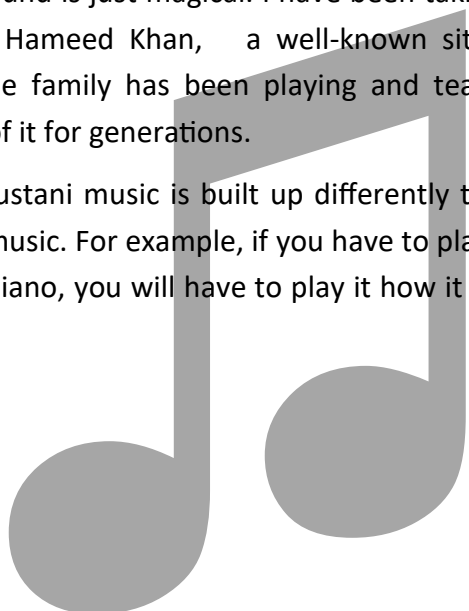
After living in Kalkeri for a certain period of time, it is impossible not to get touched by this special music. The children practicing the flute, tabla or vocals will wake you up, and the sound of this music will still be ringing in your ears when you fall asleep. I chose the sitar for me four weeks after my arrival. Its sound is just magical. I have been taking classes with Hameed Khan, a well-known sitar player, whose family has been playing and teaching the use of it for generations.

Hindustani music is built up differently than western music. For example, if you have to play Bach on the piano, you will have to play it how it is written,

whereas Hindustani Music gives you more space for your own interpretation. The fundamentals of it are more than 2000 ragas written a long time ago. Each raga has one specific melody made out of one scale. Two ragas can never have the same scale. With the scale of one raga, you can do more or less whatever you want during the play, only you must come back to the melody that repeats itself between your improvisations. I really like this different way of playing.

Apart from the music, I was able to look at many other aspects of Indian culture. Since Kalkeri is a very small village in the middle of Karnataka, the life of the people remains very traditional. I had possibility of going to many Indian marriages (which are still arranged by the parents in most cases), and I celebrated many Indian festivals like for example the one for Ganesh, the elephant god, with all the locals. Above all, however, I lived the everyday life with all the children who became important to me.

When I now think about leaving in some weeks, I get very sad. During this year, I have had so many wonderful, new, different and sometimes difficult experiences. It was a very important year for me. I also know that it is not over. I will come back to Kalkeri for sure as soon as possible to be able to live this life again that consists of music, of children and of so much love.



## Joining the Dance

Sofie Nørgaard (Denmark), volunteer in Morocco

Published in *Youth and Intergenerational Solidarity*, Issue No. 30, February 2013

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

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



The elderly are at once crazier and more ordinary than I had ever expected – and for this simple warmth and craziness, I adore them. I adore when they smile and laugh, when they yell and fight, and when we sing, dance and drum together. The first time an old lady called me, “my girl, my girl”, my heart melted – even if she was yelling at me and calling me ugly ten minutes later when I tried to give her the daily medication. When the woman with Alzheimer remembered my face for the first time, it made my day – even if she still does not remember my name. There is no doubt that these people have already won a big part of my heart.

When I came here, it was not that easy though. The languages here are Arabic and Tamazirt, languages that I have never been in contact with before. However, in this case, it turned out to be my good fortune that these people rise above all normality. Together with smiles and laughs, dancing and making music ended up being our communication along with a well-developed body language. As soon as you give over to this craziness, language difficulties have less importance. And even if my Arabic is now substantially better than it was then, the non-speaking moments are still some of my favourite ones. Because in the same way as with children, you do not always have to speak much, you just have to join in the dance.

# Companions on Life's Journey

Rodolfo Bueso Clark (Honduras), volunteer in France

Published in *Migrating Identities*, Issue No. 31, June 2013

I want to live in a city with multi-ethnic neighbourhoods that are a global pottage, a shake of immigrants' life seasoned consistently with successive generations of newcomers. This is what I consider my 'self', my 'migrating identity', after my experience carrying out an international voluntary service involving immigrants.

My name is Rodolfo Bueso Clark, I'm from Honduras, Central America, and I was an ICYE volunteer in 2006-2007 in France. I volunteered in a small town called Étoile sur Rhône located in the south of France, in one of the communities of a movement named "Emmaüs". The Emmaüs movement was founded in France in 1947 by Abbé Pierre, promoting fund-raising activities for the marginalised population such as immigrants and refugees at a local scale, and demonstrations of collective initiatives for alternatives to situations of injustice at a global scale.

The Emmaüs community where I volunteered and lived carries out restoration and recycling activities of books, antiques, furniture and apparel to sell in a

bazaar (bric-à-brac) and fundraises for the community's sustainability. The French population in the neighbouring towns and cities donate all the goods and at the same time are clients of the bric-à-brac, a system which truly impacted on me as it accomplishes one of the main objectives of the Emmaüs movement, exchange and sharing for equal dignity.

Nonetheless, looking back at my experience, I think that what impacted on me the most was partaking in all the moments whilst living together with the true essence of the Emmaüs movement, the beneficiaries, which amazingly I got to learn are all simply called *compagnons*. This French word, *compagnon*, became so important in my vocabulary and acquired a unique and powerful meaning in my life. Throughout my whole experience, I met, welcomed and bid farewell to many *compagnons*, who represent a very important lesson in this great learning I had within Emmaüs. Many of them were French with financial problems or homeless, and many of them were immigrants fleeing from diverse problems from their home countries. However, I learnt that all of them shared a common search; they were searching for a home.

My integration in the Emmaüs community became easier as I organised different cultural events and sessions to share Honduran and Latin American culture and mostly got to know the personal lives of each of the *compagnons*. There is a quote of a *compagnon* in the 'Emmaüs literature' that states: "*You know, we never come in Emmaüs by*

*chance, we come for a story, regardless of what that story is.*" I cherish all the various stories I got to know from the *compagnons*.

I appreciated my host project very much



because I could somehow relate to the immigrants as we were undergoing a cultural adaptation process in the interesting French culture, but at the same time, I learnt of their fear to adapt to the society outside of the Emmaüs community. At the beginning, I did not understand why they were being reluctant to adapt to French society until I myself experienced intolerance and discrimination. It was shocking yet true and made me realise that I want to dedicate the rest of my life to the pursuit of an open and more just world where we have the human right to migrate and understand that the most common characteristic of all human beings is diversity.

As many immigrants and the French taught me, by understanding this, we will truly comprehend that we can learn from each other and learn from our differences. As the Emmaüs movement promotes, rather than exclude each other, let us include each other as *compagnons*, companions on life's journey.



# Social Inclusion: How an autistic Kid can be integrated in the Friendship Village

Julie Duvert (France), volunteer in Vietnam

Published in *Social Inclusion*, Issue No. 32, October 2013

The Vietnam Friendship Village is a centre located in Hanoi that provides medical care, physical therapy and education to Vietnamese children with diseases caused by Agent Orange. It has been six months since I started volunteering at Friendship Village, and I have developed the feeling that this place works like a small community, where everyone takes part in the daily life of the place, as much as they can depending on their physical and mental conditions. The tasks are done with or by the kids (like cleaning the classrooms). Moreover, the kids who are able to take care of themselves are also expected to help the younger or the more disabled ones (to go to school, to take a shower, etc.). Thus, by counting on everyone's responsibility, even of the mentally disabled individuals, the centre offers the possibility of inclusion for the children who cannot find it in the «outside world», a chance for all of them to be useful in a way. The centre also welcomes autistic kids, children who have more difficulties to integrate in the social world. Can those kids find a minimum of social relationship in this community despite the empty world they build around them?

Viêt is 10 years old and still does not speak. When I first met him, his main hobby was hitting people, pushing adults and kids to their limits by annoying, stealing, etc. He is always spoiling his chance to build a link with someone, to be accepted, at least by his classmates. But the teacher, instead of focusing on his behaviour, tries to focus on his abilities. For example, Việt likes to go take the rubbish to the bin at the opposite side of the Village. And this is no problem; he can do it, even during class. First, Việt was surprised, took the rubbish outside and came back to start again with his «jokes». But after a while, he was able to decide for himself the right moment to do this work. Now, when his own breaking point gets closer, he asks the teacher for a «rubbish break».

Furthermore, Việt found some other strategies to handle his relationship difficulties, especially during the free time activities that the teacher allows the kids every morning and afternoon. Instead of asking to go outside to the bin, Việt is now developing some itineraries inside of the classroom: he uses a chair that he pushes to carry many different objects from one side of the room to the other, and often asks my help, or sometimes just uses my arms as shells. He is careful to not touch anyone while moving his things. This is positively the first time I can see him avoiding physical contact, which still often leads to fights. He stares at me at those moments, maybe to call me as witness.

Some other kids started to play this “game” with him a few weeks ago and ever since then things changed slowly. He has finally found, by himself and thanks to the teacher's comprehension, a way to be with his classmates. Of course, not everything is solved for him yet, and it will probably never be the case. But the work that Việt is doing right now, even if it is still not scholarly work, at least helps him to be included and allows him to experience new things, also with others.

Of course, Việt's case must not be generalised. He was probably ready, even if he didn't know it, to find his way to community life instead of always making himself excluded by hitting others. He finally found a «job», his job, the job that actually no one wants to do: he is now the “rubbish man”. My presence and that of another volunteer in the class may have helped as well. We were mostly useful in giving the teacher a hand when he was out of control, always free to go outside with him for a minute. As it is often said, I don't see our work only like the one of a teaching assistant. First of all, we bring in another way of being with the children. But, most importantly and like we did for Việt, we can start to think together with the teacher about a child's work. Moreover, the international presence in the centre brings in a piece of the outside world that some kids use to start the inclusion process.

Việt's story shows us that we should never give up on the most difficult kids. Social inclusion, even at a small level, can always begin for them: we have to let them develop their little solutions when they face problems. I think that in centres like the Friendship Village, where there is very limited staff, the presence of volunteers is important. The more adults the kids can find around them, which for each of them provides different ways to behave, increases the possibilities for them to find someone to work with. Yet, even if social inclusion in the centre is possible, the way to inclusion in the outside world is still very long. Perhaps it is not only the children who have to change but everybody's mentality as well by welcoming them in the best way in the world, their world.



## Taking a deeper look

Tuuli Hostikka (Finland), volunteer in Germany

Published in *Volunteering for a Sustainable Future*, Issue No. 34, July 2014



**V**olunteering is generally considered an altruistic activity which promotes the improvement of human quality of life. I'm volunteering at the ICYE International Office and it is clear that my work routines are not directly linked to working for a sustainable future. I'm not helping disadvantaged people, nurturing animals or working on environmental issues. I do administrative tasks like corresponding with member and partner organisations and editing activity reports. I have faced many questions when people hear that my voluntary work is as an office assistant, but for me this experience has been for sure the most suitable way to understand the meaning of volunteering and the importance of promoting it. I am amazed at how much I have gained through my work in an international atmosphere for projects taking place all over the world.

When I decided to volunteer, I didn't think of it as an altruistic act, but nevertheless it has taught me the importance of having a wider view to the world. Previously, I worked for a company with which I didn't share the same values. I was forced to act against my own morals for example by throwing eatable food away every day. During this experience working in an organisation, which shares my values, I have decided to live in a way that I can feel good about my actions.

The European Commission defines Sustainable Development as "a better quality of life for everyone, now

and for generations to come"(<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/>). I think that one thing that prevents us from creating a better quality for everyone is the will to have more than one needs. Exploitation of natural resources, other species and human beings is usually happens because of one's wish to possess more and more. Why aren't we trying harder to stop these kinds of actions? I think one form of greediness is also indifference. The will to preserve one's own comfortable space as long as problems do not directly affect you.

Through my voluntary work, the boards of my box are breaking while the world is coming closer to me. Countries on the other side of the world are not just distant anonymous places anymore, but home countries of people who I contact every day in my work. And the events somewhere far away are affecting all of us from the perspective of a sustainable future. I no longer consider myself just a citizen of a country in northern Europe, but as a citizen of the world, and I understand that the everyday choices I make are statements about what kind of actions I want to support or not.

A sustainable future is not just in the hands of big organisations or policymakers, but equally in the hands of every citizen's life choices and refusal to look away. Every altruistic act is advancing the possibilities for sustainable future.

# Volunteers should have the courage to be a little more “Activist!”

Katharina Boerlin (Switzerland), volunteer in Honduras

Published in *Volunteering and Activism – Two sides to the same coin?*, Issue No. 35, October 2014

“Going to Honduras was one of the best experiences I have had so far in my life.

Being a volunteer is not something extraordinary among my friends and family. I would

even say this about the culture I was born in and in the country I live in, Switzerland. Due to the high salaries people earn, many services would not be possible without people doing it for free. In my everyday life – which can be stressful and exhausting – voluntary work has always been a welcome change.

I do not remember when I first volunteered as a child, whether it was by selling stickers for WWF or when I made flower wreath for a bazaar. Nevertheless, my first long-term volunteer experience happened in 2008 - 2009 when I travelled with ICYE to Honduras, where I worked as a volunteer. Going to Honduras was one of the best experiences I have had so far in my life. The experience of being a complete foreigner, of being the one attracting attention because of your otherness and questioning your lifestyle is an extremely enriching part of your life. My daily life changed completely when I first touched Honduran ground. The freedom I had had was lost because of a very high crime rate, food that I used to eat every day could not be bought, and the people I loved and missed were far away. However, I adapted quickly and could discover myself by discovering a new world.

My volunteer work in a small town called La Esperanza in the middle of hills, lagoons and strawberry fields never felt like a duty or burden I had to bear. Sincerely, it never felt like work at all. Almost every morning we drove to the indigenous communities in the surroundings of La Esperanza, where I supported teachers at school by cooking lunch, playing with the children or looking after the garden. All these timid smiles, every tortilla I could form, and every grateful mother were the salary I received, and it was more than enough for me.

This surplus of motivation led to a further involvement on my part with ICYE. I really wanted people to have the experience I had and still remember every day. After some years of being responsible for the volunteers coming to Switzerland, I decided to go to Madrid to participate in the first meeting of “The Volunteer Activist” project because I thought it was a very

inspiring combination of volunteering and activism, and at the same time, we got the chance to create our own campaign and carry it out. With the campaign “ContACT – Live intercultural exchange” volunteers of ICYE Switzerland and I spent a good time together, always facing new goals, bringing new ideas in and learning a lot about campaigning. In our campaign about intercultural programmes in the European Union and Switzerland, we faced a political problem and this made my work seem more like the work of an activist than it used to be before.

To me volunteering and activism can be connected easily but they are not the same at all. Volunteering is something I do because I am convinced of the work and the contribution I can make to society. At the same time, I completely agree that I should not earn any money for the work I do as a volunteer. A friend of mine defines this as “circles”, you act and it does not need to bring any profit for yourself, but the person you help might be inspired by what you do and help another person. Like this, it goes on and on – until in the end someone might help you and the wheel has become a full circle. By being an activist, I face a goal or change and although it might be hard sometimes to do what has to be done, I continue because I always think of the goal I pursue. This is the reason why I would say that only a few volunteers are (conscious) activists but many activists are volunteers. Nevertheless, I think it is a great combination, which is positive for both sides. Maybe I should start combining it more often and spread the word among friends and family. In this way, we could maybe not just go on living as we have always done, but also change political facts we do not like.



## Land of Ice without Tacos

Erick Iván Ruiz Saldaña (Mexico), volunteer in Iceland

Published in *Volunteers at the Interface between Formal and Non-Formal Education*, Issue No 41, October 2016

**M**y name is Erick Iván Ruiz Saldaña and I'm a volunteer in the Waldorf kindergarten 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, 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 Reykjavík 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 that could be made of those views, and I never get bored of that.

When I get to the kindergarten 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 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 speaks English and that's 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 kindergarten without knowing at least basic Icelandic is the equivalent of a lost penguin in the desert.



Speaking Icelandic at the beginning was quite hard, but it has taught me that words are very important when you are teaching children and that in each language their meanings can be very 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 kindergarten is to let them discover and play by themselves using the most beautiful gift from the gods: IMAGINATION. This is when non-formal education comes with all its power to the kindergarten 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 other activities such as taking pictures and making videos for the kindergarten 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).



...I have lived experiences that one day I am sure to tell my grandchildren about around a campfire while playing the guitar...

## The Other Side of the World

Vanessa Kirui (Kenya), volunteer in Colombia

Published in *Practical Experiences in Intercultural Learning and Human Rights*, Issue No. 43, July 2017

If I had to describe my time in Colombia, the words challenge, opportunity and growth come to mind, in exactly that order, and without trying to sound too generic or vague. I chose to come to Colombia for six months, without any idea of what I was going to find 'hoping for the best but expecting the worst'. I must admit there is a certain anxiety that comes with travelling to a place that people consider to be almost forbidden. The truth is that I found a very different Colombia when I arrived. I was greeted by incredibly warm and beautiful people (it reminded me a lot of home) and perhaps what surprised me the most was the landscape. It is not often that you find yourself in a hectic city with more than nine million people and also have the opportunity to climb the surrounding mountains as and when you like. I personally had never been to a place that captured chaos and tranquillity so effortlessly. So as you can imagine, it wasn't long before I felt incredibly ignorant because of how little I knew of its people and landscapes. I learned quickly to appreciate all the quirky traits that the country and Bogotá in particular had and soon fell in love with different places, Salento being perhaps my favourite.

I personally felt incredibly blessed, living in a nice part of Bogotá and getting along with my host mother. Learning, for example how to cook Arepas to learning new tricks to old things such as making a cup of hot chocolate using tools (molinillo) I had never seen before. I learnt a lot about myself in the six months but more so about community and cooperation, understanding the importance of participating and communicating with others, carrying your own weight and adjusting in order to be mindful of those around you, lessons that I believe are incredibly important and essentially at the core of the ICYE mission.

My project taught me more things than I could have imagined. I worked at a foundation with children aged between 4 and 15. A typical day for me consists of helping in the kitchen in the morning, drawing murals on the walls, serving lunch to the children and giving English or French lessons. It was during these days that I was presented with an overwhelming opportunity, to exchange experiences, lessons and skills.

There is a negative connotation around charity and volunteering, where one assumes perhaps that they have more to offer than those they are helping. However, that is far

from the reality of it. It is in Colombia that I realised that there is something to learn from everyone. It was great being able to educate and breakdown stigmas about my country and Africa in general. Being the first African most of the children had ever come across, I felt the responsibility of being a good example. I learned a variety of things from the children, from their help with Spanish to how to overcome great adversity and to keep smiling through it all. I was able to understand more about the psychology of children and appreciate the ways in which they learn, and what forms their personality by being able to watch how they developed and changed within the six months. They helped break down some of the preconceived notions I had about people by defying and breaking through constraints and limits that had been placed on them their whole lives in terms of education and achievement.

I also realised the importance of upbringing and education, that education is a fundamental part of life. I believe that education is something that every child should have a right to, regardless of their background or circumstance, for "education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom and opportunity". Through ICYE, I have a greater understanding of what it means to be a global citizen and more so what it means to participate and not be passive throughout life. There is always something to be learnt and to be done.



## Learning by Experience

Kerstin Lintner (Austria), volunteer in Colombia

Published in *Youth Volunteering against Racism*, Issue No. 44, November 2017

**R**acism – a word that nowadays is in every mouth, in every newspaper and every TV-show. In the last few years, people started to use it on a day-to-day basis, even though most of us, and with us, I mean Europeans, have never really been victims of it and are therefore talking without really knowing what it is about. But how can one change that?

ICYE is a programme that enables young people from all over the world to take part in voluntary activities, but more importantly, it is a programme that offers an intercultural exchange to everybody willing to broaden their horizon, no matter if black or white, European or Asian, everybody can learn something.

I am staying in Cali right now. It is a city with around 35% of black people. However, apart from the children in my project, I don't really come across any of them. So I started to ask and found out that this is because we are staying in the „good“ part of the city. The black people, however, belong to the marginalised people and therefore don't live in the centre but rather in the side districts of the city. From my experience here, I can say that the people in my project are the most kind and generous people; they are more than patient with me and my Spanish and really bright if you take the time and talk to them. And that counts for everyone not just the adults.

I would like to say that one should think less about the opinions of others but instead get to know people. I also think that due to this experience, being the one that doesn't belong, the one that looks different and doesn't speak the language, I will never again judge people who are different from me, but rather accept them and appreciate them for whatever they are doing. Everybody is different and that's the way it is supposed to be.



## Common Ground through Flexibility

David MacMurtrie (USA), volunteer in Indonesia

Published in *Youth Volunteering against Racism*, Issue No. 44, November 2017

Catholicism is often stereotyped as a very strict religion. The image of a fearsome nun wielding a ruler before a seventh grade class is often a popular image that comes to mind. When compared to Catholicism, however, Islam seems even more stringent. The rules which require all consumed food to be Halal, prayer at five different times throughout the day, and, most infamously, a woman's head coverings seem excessive and rigid compared to a Catholic's obligation to attend church every Sunday, and to avoid meat on Fridays during Lent. Yet, people remain people, regardless of their beliefs, and now, more than any other time in history, the majority of people observe their religion more liberally than what the written laws of that faith may dictate. The idea of religion in the West, be it Christianity, Spiritualism, or anything in between, has become a more personal endeavor, rather than one dictated by a larger body. Many religious persons have their own level to which they choose to take their faith. As someone raised in a Catholic household, I have observed this throughout my life, and adjusted my own beliefs through a similar methodology. However, I never considered that this may not be strictly a western system of belief. Thus, I was unprepared for a surprising comparison.

The year I spent in Indonesia was one of the most extraordinary years of my life, and I mean that in the most literal sense. Everything was out of the ordinary, or at least, my ordinary - I experienced people, customs, food, cultural habits, technology, and even transportation methods I had never encountered before, all of which opened my eyes to a much larger world.

Indonesia is an innately religious country, 85% of which is Muslim. I had some interaction with Christians and Hindus; however, the people with whom I spent most of my time ate no pork, and fasted during

Ramadan. I grew accustomed to hearing the Call to Prayer extolling from the nearby mosque, celebrating traditional Muslim holidays, and seeing women in hijab while hiking, at concerts, or at the beach. I had had no previous experience with anything remotely similar to these scenarios. And to be introduced at a time when the world is in an upheaval of mistrust, discrimination, and fear concerning individuals of that very religion proved to be, at the very least, enlightening.



My time in Indonesia was spent teaching in a special education school. Two of the other teachers spoke English, so I took full advantage of the opportunity to find out more about Islam. I learned that Indonesian Muslims consider themselves more liberal Muslims, at least compared to those in the Middle East. I questioned them about stories of Muslim historical characters, especially those that shared commonalities with the stories from the Bible I learned as a child. They tried to explain to me the roles of women in the household, their own feelings about the acts of terrorism throughout the world, the reasoning behind the no-pork laws, and how much or little they actually followed the strict rules of the religion. In the midst of all of these discussions, I began to notice various similarities to Christians, and to Christianity.

I came to realize that Muslims, strict as the requirements may be, exercise their own methods of liberalism in the context of their faith. Some women choose to wear their hijab no matter what, as long as a visitor is present, even in their own home. Yet I have a Muslim friend abroad in Germany who rarely wears her hijab in her travels. One of my friends knew all the required words of the Quran, though they are in Arabic. I thought this an impressive feat, until he told me he does not know what they mean. Later, a teacher who was explaining to me some of the stories that intersected with the Bible could not remember vital parts of the story, nor could she explain why certain events happened.

I learned that Islam, like Christianity, has smaller sects, and that certain mosques throughout the city belong to those particular factions. They are not separate in their beliefs, but neither are they identical. The same can easily be said for Catholicism and any of the Protestant denominations.

I was surprised by these, and other instances, because I had never thought of Islam as a flexible religion. It was common for a Catholic to skip church on Sundays, or be unable to quote the New Testament, but my twenty-five-year-long impression of Islam pictured Muslims who were far more faithful, and far more diligent than the average Catholic, either by choice, or because they had no choice. Yet I had never considered the people belonging to that religion also celebrate birthdays, as we do in the West, value their weekends, as we do in the West, enjoy selfies, work to support their families, and post it all on Facebook, just as we do in the West. The fact that Indonesians may say "Praise God" more than the average American, or have access to a prayer room anywhere they go has little to do with what they fear, who they love, how they work, or with whom they choose to associate. Religion does not, and should not separate one people from another. If anything, it only contributes to the proof that we are more similar than we may first assume.

# Kia Kitea Toikaka – Nothing but the Best

Janina Baal (Germany), volunteer in New Zealand

Published in *Making a Difference: From Conservation and Health Care to Art, Culture and Education*, Issue No. 46, August 2018

**H**ave 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 are only around for 6 months. It is important never to lose sight of the ultimate goal - making a lasting difference in somebody's life. It is very important, even when you are just laying the base for it, as one of the teachers here told me. Have a look at the world map, at the bottom southeast of Australia, you will find New Zealand. Look a little closer at the South Island and you will 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 would 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 forward 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!"



## Everyday Lagos

Małgorzata Głogowska (Poland), volunteer in Nigeria

Published in *Skills and Competences for a Global World*, Issue No. 47, October 2018

“

Lagos showed me a different face of Africa. Not the one from news, nor from non-fiction books or even reports. A more complex one.

Traveling is very important to me. Since I was 18 years old, I spent at least three 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 the 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 traveling 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 gossip). What's more there are about 2000 new citizens every day. I think the word that describes Lagos the best is “anxious” and a synonym for lagosian should be “hustler”. This city is challenging. Always buzzing, loud, chaotic and an absolutely fascinating place.

I came to Nigeria to discover more about 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 the

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 an 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 nine African countries, I had a chance to participate in the 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 the 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 fascinating. I also think it is important and needed in today’s world.

One of the things I appreciate the most are conversations. The 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 a more realistic

perspective of poverty. Slum is not a strange and dangerous place to me anymore. Social and economic 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. A more complex one. With a very lively alternative culture, great art scene deriving

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 every day I come across a new, smaller or bigger, challenge. But I proved myself, every time I am able to find a lesson in difficulties and joy in differences. I realised that I am very good with intercultural and interpersonal communication. And I know that after living in Lagos for six months, I am ready for everything.



## Findings of an ICYE impact study

The *Skills and Competences for a Global World* project began on the 1st August 2017 and ran until the 31st July 2019. Funded by Erasmus+ Key Action 2, the project was coordinated by the ICYE International Office and involved volunteers taking part in European Voluntary Service (EVS) and being placed in a range of host organisations around the world. A central part of the project was an impact study, the key findings of which we would like to present.

The study assessed the impacts of the EVS volunteering programme on ten volunteers in the project, who received baseline surveys before the start of their volunteering. Towards the end of the volunteers' placements, in-depth interviews were conducted with the ten volunteers, staff from host organisations (16), and staff from (ICYE) host-coordinating organisations (nine).

The impact study was undertaken collaboratively by members of ICYE staff (who led the fieldwork, completed and transcribed the interviews, and administered the surveys): Cat Udall, Manager, ICYE United Kingdom; Kerubo Nyaribo, Director, ICYE Kenya; Rodolfo Bueso Clark, Incoming Coordinator, ICYE Honduras; Rubaica Jaliwala, Programme Officer, ICYE International Office; and Sara Paredes, General Director, Grenzenlos Interkultureller Austausch – ICYE Austria. An independent research consultant, Nick Ockenden, completed the analysis of the interviews and survey data and wrote the impact report.

We present here only the impact on the volunteers from the perspectives of the volunteers (self-reported impact) and the host organisations, which was the main focus of the study.

ICYE

International Cultural Youth Exchange

1949-2019

ICYE has provided placements for 30,000 volunteers in 40 countries across 4 continents

70 YEARS

Impact on volunteers

Knowledge

Global learning

Life skills & competences

Boosting career & employability

Social capital: friends & networks worldwide

Provides 800 placements worldwide

www.ICYE.org

## Impact on volunteers

Impact on volunteers was examined in relation to personal, social, and intercultural impact. While many notable benefits are identified, it should be noted that they are emergent in nature as their volunteering placements had not yet finished at the time of interview; it is possible that many longer-term impacts may not be seen until long after their volunteering has come to an end.

### Personal impact

- **Language improvements** were the most commonly discussed impact
- **Development of softer skills and improvements in patience, confidence and communication skills**, as well as **ability to manage stress and conflicts** were also discussed. While they often built on existing character traits displayed by the volunteers, the **changes could frequently be significant** and would be likely to be **important in their future careers, lives and relationships in the longer-term**.

“ I am so happy about it. I felt so welcome, and it is just like, it has been the greatest experience of my life.

### Social impact

- **Making new friends and forming relationships** was the main impact in terms of interpersonal relationships.
- The main topic of the volunteer's **wellbeing was homesickness**, which all volunteers felt to some degree. The severity of this could be impacted on by the extent to which they had made friends during their placement.
- All volunteers discussed their **personal enjoyment and satisfaction gained** from their volunteering placements, whilst acknowledging the presence of stressful and challenging situations. For many, their **volunteering appeared to be a life-changing experience that they would remember for their whole lives**.

“ I got a lot of courage to speak more about what I'm feeling .

### Intercultural learning

- Volunteers described **important changes in their sense of identity** and **changes in their personality**.
- **Awareness of others and learning about new cultures** were also important impacts, which reflected the volunteers' **willingness to learn from others and experience new challenges and environments**.

“ Volunteering changed everything and now I really want to travel more and know more countries, more people, more organisations.

This study shows that volunteers experience important and significant personal benefits. The **cultural exchange element remains a strong and important element** of the ICYE volunteering programme. The study emphasises the **potential of volunteering programmes for broadening perspectives and challenging stereotypes, as well as providing volunteers an important opportunity to reflect on their own culture**. The experience is also likely to have an impact on their future careers, lives and relationships.

# ***New* Practical Guide for Intercultural Learning in International Voluntary Service**

One of the publications of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project *Skills and Competences for a Global World* is the new [Practical Guide for Intercultural Learning in International Voluntary Service](#). This practical guide updates and replaces the *Practical Guide for EVS/ICYE Trainings in EU and Partner Countries* created within the scope of the Youth in Action project “Promoting Interethnic Dialogue” (2007-2008).

The project *Skills and Competences for a Global World* (2017-2019) has built on the foundations of the ICYE volunteering programme – with a qualitative study examining impacts of the volunteering and cultural exchange experience on volunteers, and trainings to boost the skills and competences of trainers in intercultural learning.

The practical guide is aimed at staff, trainers and youth workers of sending and hosting organisations to prepare, train and support volunteers in using to the best advantage their volunteering time to maximise learning outcomes.

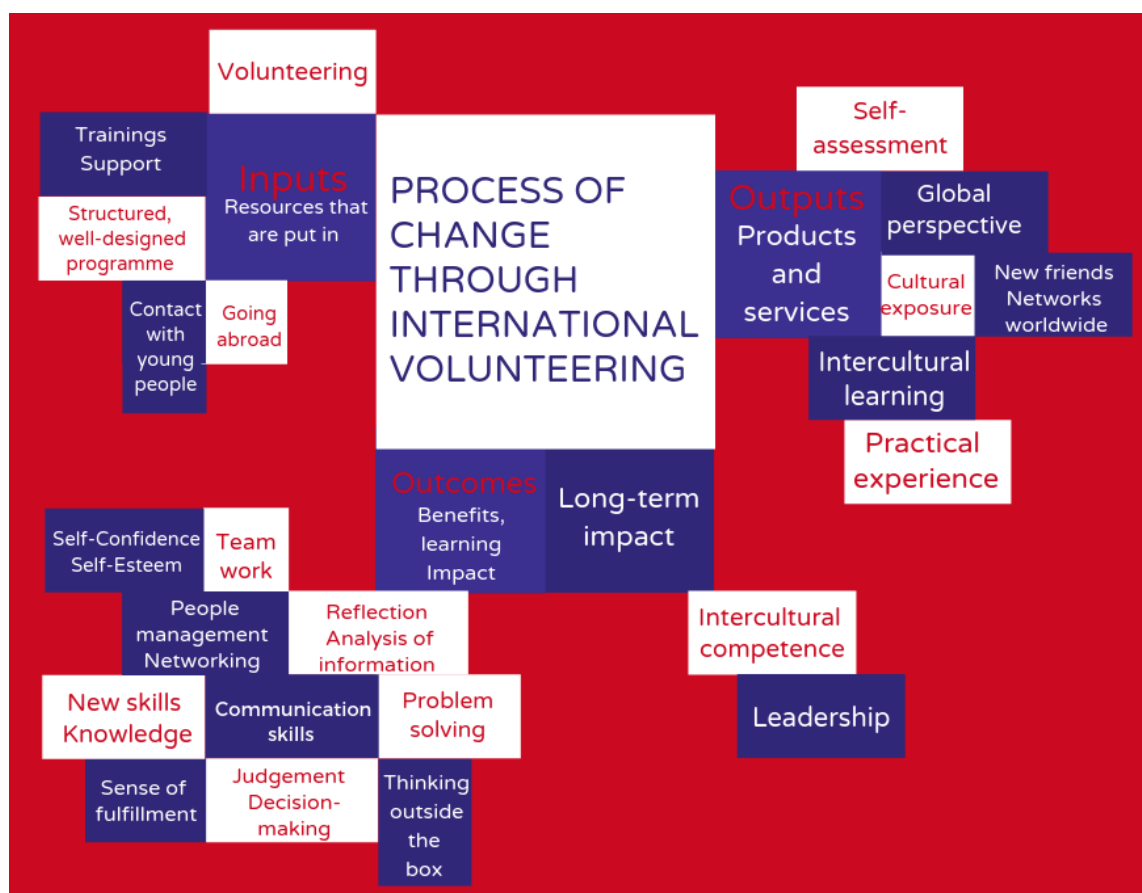
The guide offers 45 non-formal and intercultural learning methods including theoretical input and introductory exercises that support learning and reflection on prejudice and discriminatory behaviour patterns for a society based on solidarity and respect of human dignity and human rights. It provides guidelines for exploring issues of identity, diversity, and power relations, and promoting equality and respect for human rights.

# Practical Guide for Intercultural Learning in International Voluntary Service



Produced in the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project  
Skills and Competences for a Global World  
ICYE International Office, 2019

# Process of Change



ICYE volunteering programmes initiate a process of learning and change that can be seen in the graphic above, reflected also in the findings of the impact study of the project *Skills and Competences for a Global World* presented above.

The process of change highlights:

- the **inputs, i.e. resources that are put in** (structured and well-designed international voluntary service programme that provides the training and support, and contact with peers),
- the **outputs, i.e. products and services** gained through the programme (intercultural learning, practical experience in host organisations, cultural exposure, a global perspective, new friends and networks around the world, self-awareness and self-assessment), and
- the **outcomes, i.e. benefits and learning impact** (problem solving, creativity/thinking outside the box, new knowledge and skills, communication skills, teamwork, people management and networking, judgement and decision-making, reflection and analysis of information, self-confidence and self-esteem, and a sense of fulfilment). The **outcomes** include **long-term impact** (intercultural competences and leadership).

Many of the skills gained through volunteering, such as problem solving, creativity, judgement and decision-making, are part of the top ten skills that equip young people for the future (Future of Jobs Report, World Economic Forum, 2017).

# Recognition for ICYE from the European Commission

On 16 April 2019, the ICYE International Office received an official intimation that the its Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project *Volunteers at the Interface between Formal and Non-Formal Education* has been selected as a “success story” by a panel of experts from the Directorate-General for Education, Youth Sports and Culture of the European Commission.

“Success Stories” are finalised projects that have distinguished themselves by their impact, contribution to policy-making, innovative results and/or creative approach and can be a source of inspiration for others. The selection of “success stories” is based on rigorous criteria regarding its quality, relevance and results.

Information on the project can be found on the [Erasmus+ Project Results Platform](#) and on the ICYE Federation [website](#).

We are particularly proud of the publication [Non-Formal Learning Handbook for Volunteers and Volunteering Organisations](#), which offers a selection of 40 non-formal learning methods to enhance academic/learning achievement, intercultural learning, physical and emotional development and social interaction of children and young people.

This recognition is the result of the commitment, enthusiasm and high quality work of all the project partners to whom we express our congratulations and appreciation.

