The art of volunteering

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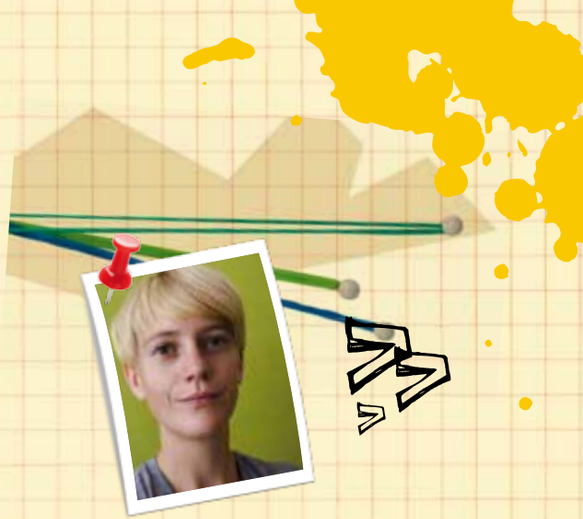

Miwa Tanaka

33, from Japan, volunteer at Kindergarten 'Gatschhüpfer'

In March it was very cold and also I could not really communicate, so I felt very small as a person. In April it was getting warmer outside and I also picked up some words, the communication started. Now, in May, we can communicate with each other and show our feelings. The last circle represents the future, and I don't know yet what it will bring, but I think that it could even be much bigger, because I really feel I am growing here in Vienna.

I think the concept of this kindergarten is to be friends with nature. That's why it is located outside of the city, near the forest, and not inside a building. Most of the time the children are playing outside or in our Jurte (Mongolian tent). We are also walking a lot through the woods, and I help to take care of them, so no one gets lost or hurt. And mostly, I play with the children.

The most difficult thing for me is the language, because I speak English and Japanese and the children speak German, so we communicate through body language or we ask the teachers to translate.

What I can learn here is feelings. Back in Japan I was working so hard and had a lot of stress, so I decided that I wanted to be more free. And being here with the children and being in nature gives me the opportunity just to play and be happy.