

An inventory of Youth Voluntary Service possibilities and their impact

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1. CCIVS

The Co-ordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS) is an international non-governmental organization, which works towards peace, development and human rights through the promotion, development and co-ordination of national and international voluntary service.

CCIVS was created in 1948 under the aegis of UNESCO for the coordination of voluntary service worldwide. Over the following 50 years, CCIVS has expanded its membership from a Western European base to include youth movements in Eastern Europe and volunteer organizations in Africa, Asia, Arab countries and the Americas. Today CCIVS works with 242 member organizations and their branches present in more than 90 countries.

THE OBJECTIVES OF CCIVS

The objectives of CCIVS are related to the promotion and development of the voluntary service movement on national, regional and International levels in the contemporary world:

- The propagation and development of the aims of voluntary service and its educational impact both on the volunteers and the community in which they work
- The promotion and development of relations and co-operation with other voluntary service and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- The support of the United Nations Principles : co-operation and contribution to the implementation of the programs and the initiatives of the United Nations and its bodies on questions of common interest, especially to develop co-operation on a broader scale with UNESCO, striving for the realization of common initiatives and the contribution to each others programs.

ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE CO-ORDINATION

- Co-ordination and promotion of activities of member organizations;
- Organization of international and regional conferences, seminars, courses and workcamps;
- Presentation of the issues concerning the international voluntary service movement towards international organizations and various other fora;
- International solidarity campaigns and special joint actions of voluntary service organization;
- Research and Publications;
- Information and documentation;
- Fundraising.

2. A picture of voluntary activities across Europe

First of all, it is important to define voluntary service:

PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS:

CCIVS member organisations generally work with **non- specialised volunteers of all ages**, who are willing to invest their time, energy and fantasy in a project for the benefit of a local community **anywhere on the globe**.

Duration:

The projects can be **short term** (2-4 weeks), **medium term** (up to 3 months) or **long term** (up to 1 or even 2 years). The short term projects are usually group projects called **workcamps**, while the medium or long term projects usually consist in **individual placements** within a given community. We are doing this difference in CCIVS for a better analyse and cmprehension of the different types of voluntary service.

SOME STATISTICS...

There are a lot of statistics talking about the voluntary service. In the bibliography there are some publications which treat the impact of the voluntary service from the point of view of the numbers and the statistics. Indeed, the Annual report of SCI and Alliance for year 2002 locate within the framework the volunteers and distribute them according to age, sex, their choice for the workcamps. The majority of the participating volunteers on workcamps are students, women in majority and they take part in projects of environment, antiracism, young people and children. During the year the number of the workcamps and volunteers increased, but at the same time, there are volunteers who gave up and projects were cancell.

Statistics made on the European Voluntary Sevice (EVS) by the Structure of Operational Support, in 1999, present the volunteers having take part in the EVS project. The results showed some weak and strong points of the program and they were positive from the point of view of the evaluation of the volunteers experience. 95% of the volunteers said that their experience was good or very good. The questionnaires made it possible to collect the opinion of the volunteers on what was the impact of the EVS in their lives and how they evaluated their experience in negative terms against positive results. These evaluations and statistics alow to put in evidence that an evaluation must be regularly carried out in order to have a European vision of the profile of the young people and impact of the EVS on their course. The volunteers told full of things, in a free way, what shows that in a certain manner the EVS left a print in their life.

For example, the statistics of SCI show the following dates:

a)concerning the themes of the workcamps:

- 25% environnement
- 15% children, teens, elderly
- 11% arts, culture, local history
- 10% disabled
- 9% antifascism, antiracism, minorities

b)volunteers sent by SCI Branches by status:

- 65% students
- 22% employed
- 4% unemployed
- 2% other
- 7% unknown

c) volunteers in camps by SCI Branches by gender

- 66% female
- 34% male

The Alliance statistics show for the 2002 the following:

- from 16652 volunteers: 72% sent abroad and 28% in the country
- 34% males, 66% females
- 10% under 18, 70% between 18 and 25, 20% over 25 years old

During the research, it was discovered that the most important part of the researches on voluntary service (as opposed to national service) are made in Europe, on young people performing a voluntary service in Europe or on the other continents. They are engaged in different types of voluntary service, short-, medium- or long-term. It was noticed that voluntary service activities influence the personality of the volunteer, his/her intercultural awareness, his/her future professional life. Voluntary service also improves and changes local and global communities.

The research uses a total of 17 publications (see annexed list). It is structured into three main topics, focusing on personal development, intercultural development and local development. The research starts with an introductory table, summarising the publications used, and giving ideas about the type of publication, statistics, region concerned, type of volunteer activity, etc. It then continues with a description of the working methods and the definitions used, followed by a detailed description of the conclusions on the three main topics, and each individual publication. The research ends with a conclusion regrouping the main topics.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Voluntary service allows “the practice and the training of the democracy”. Volunteering makes it possible to assume responsibilities and to take decisions. At the same time, it allows to the volunteer to re-use all the knowledge that he/she accumulated on the project. Then, in a project, the existing differences according to the cultures, the environment, knowledge of people, become a way of life, a richness for everyone. The young people are in contact with a new medium, another know-how, another culture. The culture plays an important role in a project by offering an international opening, creating an international identity.
- Volunteers have an important role in society. Answering to a social request, they fill important functions for their organisation, using the means of the associative structure.
- Volunteering allows young people to integrate the social, political, economical life in a new context, where the relations are more equitable. Within the framework of associations, the young people can defend the values in which they believe: human rights, the tolerance, national heritage, etc.
- Voluntary service is not just pure altruism, the volunteer also receives and expects from his/her activity. He/she has 2 requirements: "to live decently" and "to have a role in the organisation". Within the framework of community life, the voluntary service answers these requests, because associations appear to set up projects of common interest for volunteers.
- If the professional life has its constraints, volunteering it is stimulating- it allows the volunteer a human contact with the others, a training of the social life, to raise new challenges, to open out.

Voluntary service constitutes for the young person a possibility of developing social values, of forging a stronger identity and of acquiring experience and skills not provided in the sector of formal education or the vocational training; the young people become conscious of their citizenship. Volunteering is opened to everyone, independently of the school, economic or social preparation and that makes the voluntary service an important instrument for social inclusion. Moreover, it supports the mobility of the young people, which contributes in a very important way to intercultural comprehension.

First of all we have to consider the impact at personal level. Is the voluntary service the search for an ideal or the response to this ideal? The volunteer is placed in an unknown situation where he should rebuild the elements which melt its rooting in its engagement and its convictions. This experience reinforces the sense of certain values like solidarity

The voluntary service must be used for social integration, citizen engagement, to find different ways to see the world and to find his own place like a volunteer. By participating to a long term volunteer project, the young person becomes conscious of his place in the world, he builds his place and his own answers, he becomes responsible for his activities. Within the framework of this engagement, the volunteer becomes open to other cultures, he becomes able to build his way in the life and the society, and at the same time he becomes already able to adapt more easily to all that is new or different for him

One of the studies, which was carried by a French organisation, Solidarites Jeunesses, member of Youth Action for Peace movement, concentrates more on the impact from the point of view of the personal development. We observe that more than half of volunteers after having finished their project imply themselves in associations, "especially cultural and leisure or youths and coeds or sporting". The study could note that the majority of the people lived voluntariate like a positive experience from the point of view of personal enrichment. The voluntary service made it possible to the young people to better know themselves, to gain a confidence in them, to better know the others. At the same time, this activity can be considered as a test to pass at the adulthood. After voluntary service, half of them found an employment as soon as they started to seek it and half found it in a field which had a bond with their voluntary service. What had impressed the employers it was initially the fact of having lived abroad, then the gained experience, independence and the fact of knowing a foreign language.

Among the publications, the one of the Esdime Center of Portugal talks about the European Voluntary Service (EVS) and its contributions at personal and cultural level and local development. Since 1997 this center accommodates volunteers. They try to promote a certain image of voluntariate as the most-value for the association and especially for the young person. They want to show that the EVS makes it possible to the young people to grow up, to acquire competences as well personal as professional, to know a new culture and to better develop theirs, to develop capacities of autonomy, organization, adaptability, to communicate with the others. As a personal experience, voluntariate is considered by the young people a way of giving a part of his time to the others, people or associations. For them, the voluntariat is at the same time knowing other sides of the society and it allowed to volunteers to become rich from cultural point of view by the discovery of another culture.

Talking about intercultural development, here also we have many gains. The voluntary service represents intercommunalism, partnership, interaction:

- the training of partnership
- the workcamp initiating interactions
- practice of the intercommunalism

In the Portuguese center, the volunteers are in contact with the local arts and crafts, especially that the projects proceed in the countryside. Then, after having finished their project, some make publicity and emphasize the craft industry and the culture with which they were in contact. The volunteers are familiar with people of the village, their traditions, their way of seeing the things and the life, considering that there is a great difference between the life in the city and the life in a village, other concepts and other prejudices, especially in a country like Portugal, where the traditions are still well kept. Also, the volunteers are in contact with the Portuguese cooking, which for volunteers coming from the north countries it is something new. From their side, people from the community learn things from other cultures, they come in contact with young people from other countries.

In the case of the French Scouts who went in Senegalese workcamps, the volunteers learned the concept of solidarity by working in group, in the service of the community. The workcamp is a pretext to bring closer the young people, to help them better knowing themselves and building an international solidarity. The volunteers contribute in all the cases to make live a "citizen spirit". The freedom of associations to adapt each day to their environment make them permeable to the social climate.

The local development plays an important role in the volunteer service philosophy. The assertion of the regional identities and "want to live and work in the countryside" animates the reflexion of the local populations. Other workcamp actions are presented like contesting forms vis-a-vis to the inequality of the development.

The organizations have the occasion to register their action in processes of local and regional development. The young volunteers workcamps proves to be an extremely flexible and adaptable tool. It always knew to adapt to the social and cultural evolutions.

There are important effects regarding the local development.

a) *concerning the territory:*

- internal and external valorization of the local image
- reductions are considered (continuity of social and professional vocational actions)

b) *for the local community:*

-following these educational, cultural and intercultural effects, but especially social, there is extremely to bet on participative citizenship development and thus to facilitate the emergence of local actors

c) *for the partners:*

- they consider new co-operations and grow rich by methodological contributions

In the same time, the workcamps are an important tool for the revalorization of the inheritance and of the identity image.

- to give again life to the local inheritance, to find its roots
- to confer a utility on the rehabilitated site
- to generate a dynamics of projects

The workcamp bring an aid to the local economy development:

- direct impacts on the trade and the local arts and crafts
- economic impacts of the sites rehabilitate
- indirect impact on the creation of activities

There are 4 key concepts of this form of engagement in the international co-operation under development: creativity, solidarity, responsibility and ecumenicalism.

In any case, there is a favoured field, the social economy. The workcamps are the possible answer to leave the economic crisis, to leave a process of decomposition which affects all the societies, the industrialized countries as well as the Third World.

Such a project is not at all easy to realize, especially that during my research, I realized that there are few documents which speak about the impact of the voluntary service. The case where I found documents, there were only certain passages which talked about this subject. From what I could find and noted until now., all the publications was published in Europe, especially in France. From this point of view one can say that the system of popular and nonformal education is stronger in France than elsewhere and also it has a great influence on the young people with regard to their choice compared to the voluntary service.

Another problme of the voluntary service is the recognition of the status of volunteer. There are many cases, people from Eastern Europe or from South Coutries who have problems in coming in Europe, and in most of the cases there are visas problems. There is more need to make people conscious about the voluntary service, they have to know how to make the difference between this engagement and humanitarian actions. Also, voluntary service has many interpretations in the world.

If in Europe we can find everywhere the same sense of the voluntary service, to see voluntariate, in the United States for example, voluntary service = voluntary help = national service. The voluntary help it is an activity which does not engage many responsibilities on behalf of the person who carries out it and does not ask either an engagement. It is realized in most of the cases in the spare time. On the other hand, the volunteer breaks of his usual medium to make a voluntariate, in the majority of the cases abroad, he assumes responsibilities and an engagement. At the same time, his activities are remunerated with a little money for his existence. For CCIVS and his members, **“voluntary service is an exchange between an individual, or a group of individuals and a local community. The volunteer or group of volunteers offers time, energy and effort to a project of benefit to a community, and via this project the community offers to the volunteer or group of volunteers an opportunity for experimentation, learning and personal and collective development”**. (Cotravaux, France)

Another thing that I observed while doing this research is that there are not many publications talking about the political or religious impact of the voluntary service. There are just a few paragraphs who treat the political

impact of the voluntary service. And I think there are many things to tell considering that the voluntary service is a form of popular education and that the final goal of this activity it is peace in the world.

I have to say also that the young people, the students should not regard the voluntary service as a validation of their studies, some kind of internship. The voluntary service can supplement these studies, but it remains an experiment of life, a step towards the maturite, a way of realizing their place as citizen in the society.

From my point of view, we need to set up national centers of volunteers, charged with making the studies, collecting the statistics and to constitute data banks in connection with voluntary work. It is necessary to encourage and support the role of the volunteers while rewarding, by acts of public recognition, their remarkable contribution.

ANNEX: list of publications used for comparative research

1. SCI, " *Annual Report* ", 2002 Belgique
 2. ICYE Finlande, " *Evaluation of ETVO* ", Finlande
 3. Cotravaux et INJEP, " *Les apports des chantiers de jeunes bénévoles* ", collection Mémoire, avril 1997, Paris
 4. Agence française du Programme Européen Jeunesse, " *Programme Européen Jeunesse - Bilan 2000-2002* ", 2003
-court aperçu fait par Agence Jeunesse, " *Europe Express* ", n°15, décembre 2003, pg.
 5. Structure du Support Opérationnel pour le SVE, " *Volunteers' perception on the impact of the EVS in their lives* "
 6. Agence française du Programme Européen Jeunesse en collaboration avec l'Université de Marne la Vallée, " *Le SVE : avant, pendant, après* "
 7. Vive Mexico et Lunaria, " *The International Voluntary Movement in Mexico* ", nov. 2003
 8. Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations, " *Annual Report 2002* "
 9. Thierry Roos, " *La contribution des chantiers de jeunes bénévoles internationaux en matière de développement local* ", 1997
 10. Françoise Materne, " *Analyse des modifications, de trajectoires sociales et/ou professionnelles des volontaires bénévoles engagés dans la coopération ou développement* ", juin 1987
 11. Stéphane Nove Josserand, " *Mission d'évaluation des camps -chantiers des scouts français et sénégalais 1990-1992* ", 1993
 12. Anouk Vanommeslaeghe, " *L'impact d'un volontariat long terme sur la vie citoyenne* ", septembre 2001
 13. Esdime, " *Voluntor -témoignages et expériences de volontariat* ",
 14. Bénédicte Halba et Michel le Net, " *Bénévolat et volontariat dans la vie économique, sociale et politique* ", 1997
 15. Jean Bourrieau, " *Les chantiers internationaux de jeunes volontaires et l'insertion des jeunes en difficulté: 1984-1989 analyse d'une pratique au Centre de Beaumotte* ", 1989
 16. Frédéric Billaud, Alain Piveteau, " *Pour un volontariat d'avenir. Regards croisés sur le volontariat de solidarité internationale* ", La documentation française, 2001
 17. Arthur Gillette, " *Taking People Out of Boxes and Categories: Voluntary Service and Social Cohesion* ", in " *Service in the 21st Century* " edited by Helene Perold, Susan Stroud and Michael Sherraden, 2003
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