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## Programmes and Groups

**International Volunteer Projects Programme (IVP)** organises 25 – 30 short term projects of practical benefit to local communities and voluntary groups all over Ireland each year, bringing together volunteers from Ireland and overseas. We place volunteers from Ireland in similar projects in over 50 countries world-wide.

**Development Education Programme** enables people from Ireland to join in a two month programme of voluntary work in developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

**Teenage Programme** enables young people from mainly inner-city areas to take part in voluntary work projects in Ireland and in other European countries. The participants are offered opportunities to learn new skills and meet people from different cultures and religions, the young people can learn to recognise and develop their own skills and talents.

**Dublin Local Group** volunteers help to paint and decorate homes of elderly and marginalised people living in poor housing conditions

**Long Term Volunteering** enables people to work from 3 -12 months on a variety of voluntary and community projects in Europe and North America.

### Staff Team

Tom Ryder	- Coordinator
Helen Walmsley	- Development Officer, International Volunteer Projects Programme
Grace Walsh	- Teenage Programme Coordinator
Sheila King	- Administrator
Laura Sancho	- EVS Volunteer, International Volunteer Projects Programme
Elena Ferro	- EVS Volunteer, Teenage Programme

*VSI is the Irish Branch of Service Civil International (SCI), a worldwide movement working for peace, social justice and international understanding through voluntary service, international exchanges, education and awareness programmes. Registered as Seirbhís Deonach Idirnáisiúnta Teo. Company limited by guarantee. Registration No.: 14 05 20; Charity no.: CHY 9220*

## NATIONAL COMMITTEE

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The 2007 AGM was held in the Community Centre, Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow in late November. Twenty-five members were present at the centre and along with the formal AGM we held a series of workshops on VSI priorities for 2008.

The AGM elected a new National Committee (NC). They were – **Bobby McCormack, Elaine Duffy, Kevin McParland, Sarah Ann Bennett, Cian Doherty, Laura Ni Fhlaibhin, Jenny Black, Larry Doyle, Shane O Connor, Sorcha Tormey, Thomas Townsend, Julie Cadogan and Paul Rooney.**

Along with the overall management of VSI for the year, the NC also made progress with the following issues:

Over the past year NC members have met on a monthly basis with a view to supporting VSI in its endeavours. The NC is very optimistic that we have laid important groundwork within the committee that will stand the organisation in good stead as we enter 2009.

Unfortunately efforts to introduce a marketing and events management intern as outlined in last year's plans did not come to fruition. Although our strategic plan has now been in operation for a year, progress has been slow. However, on a brighter note new and improved job descriptions and contracts are now in place. These changes as well as much needed improvements to the staff handbook are to be welcomed.

**Active and expanded Membership**  
Membership is the lifeblood for VSI. Attempts to bring in new blood will be encouraged in 2009. The strategic plan has outlined ambitious plans for membership but as a starting point we want to ask you the members to help us out. We have set a target that every member in VSI needs to get 2 more people signed up before the end of February 2009. This is easily achieved and would serve the organisation well for 2009. We would also like to take this opportunity for you the members to promote our shared vision. All of our projects could do with more volunteer involvement. During 2009 we will encourage and support your efforts to organise events and projects at a local level e.g. an awareness evening on Burma.

*“Be the Change you want to see in the world.”* **MK Gandhi**

### **Funding**

VSI are looking forward to 2009 as an opportunity to fulfil the goals set out in the strategic plan. VSI has a proud history but this history alone will not propel us into the future. We recognise that the world around us is an ever changing, interdependent and unequal place. In other words, our existence is still needed and should be appropriately valued. Oscar Wilde once said “we know the price of everything and the value of nothing”. To conduct the work we have set out for ourselves requires a substantial increase in funding and a greater involvement of volunteers. The NC realise that we need to be

proactive in our attempts to access much needed funds for us to develop and to carry out our important work. Fundraising will become an ever more important facet of our work as we try to broaden our range of activities whilst also increasing our effectiveness at our work. A strong financial foundation is necessary for VSI in order to expand our valuable programme of activities.

### **Evaluation and Reflection**

Evaluation is an area that will form a significant part of our efforts in 2009. Clear evidence based documentation will be produced throughout 2009 regarding the work of VSI that will enable further funding applications in areas not yet accessed.

### **Northern Ireland**

VSI will review the future direction of programmes and activities in NI over the coming months.

### **Leadership**

Given the scale of the challenges that VSI strives to tackle it is imperative for VSI to illustrate positive leadership in terms of being pro actives in our communities and workplaces. The same logic applies to work that is ongoing within VSI. The NC wants to take this opportunity to urge all members and activists to re double their efforts in relation to VSI. You will not be alone in your endeavours. The staff in VSI will support your ideas, activities and efforts to make this a more peaceful, equitable and just world.

### **Staff**

Tom Ryder (VSI Co-ordinator), Helen Walmsley (IVP Development

Officer), Grace Walsh (Teenage Programme Co-ordinator), Sheila King (Office Administrator), Laura Sancho and Elena Ferro are the current staff team. The NC would like to express gratitude to the staff team who over the year have approached their work in a professional and enthusiastic manner.



*The families and friends of Barbara Gill and Michael Donohue with VSI members at a Tree Planting ceremony in Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow in November 2007 to remember their contribution to VSI*

**Bernie Nash** from Co. Clare was an active member of VSI in the Galway Local Group for many years and also served as a NC member. Bernie passed away in April of this year after a long battle with illness. We pass our sympathies to her family and friends.

### **Thanks**

All our volunteers, activists and members; Sponsoring and Co-operating organisations; Youth Affairs Section of the Dept. of Education and Science; Youth In Action Programme / Leargas, Irish Aid; FAS; Howlin and O'Rourke auditors; HSE and SCI.

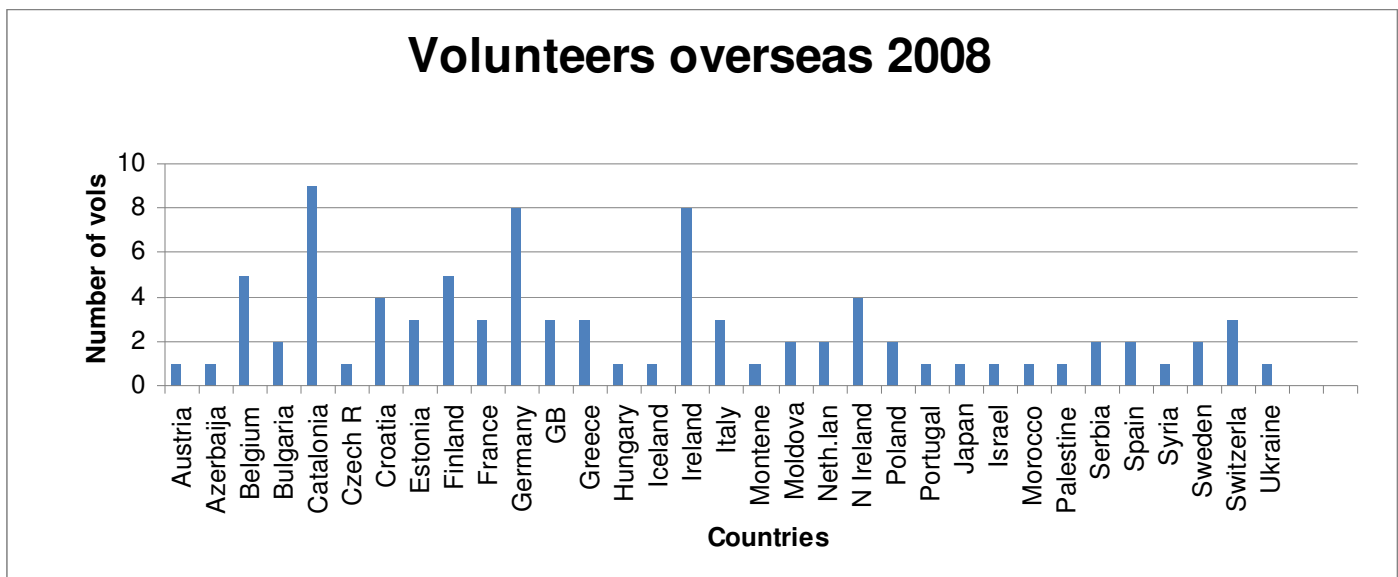
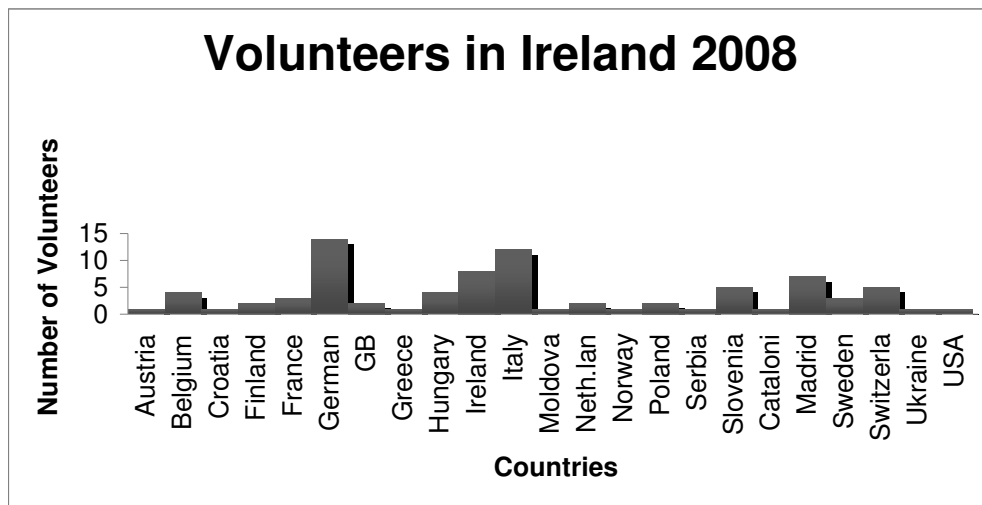
**Bobby Mc Cormack** on behalf of the VSI on National Committee

## INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

This year the International Volunteer Projects (IVP) programme hosted a total of one hundred and thirty-eight volunteers from twenty-nine different countries on projects in Ireland. Of these, one hundred and sixteen volunteers took part in twenty-seven projects in the Republic, and twenty-two in three projects in Northern

Ireland. Eighty-nine volunteers took part in projects abroad with SCI branches or partner organisations in thirty-six different countries. These volunteers worked in a variety of areas including arts and culture, work with children, people with disabilities and young people and the environment.

Breakdown of IVP volunteers in Ireland and overseas



In February we welcomed Laura Sancho Torne, as the European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteer to work as the Outgoing Placement Officer IVP. One of her first tasks was to attend the annual SCI TEM meeting in Palermo, Sicily, from the 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> February. In this meeting Laura joined other SCI branches and partner organizations in reviewing the projects from 2007, planning and preparing for the 2008 volunteering season and discussing important SCI issues. Laura has been responsible for all the outgoing placements and has also been invaluable in working on all other areas of the IVP programme.

Laura participated in the project at Glebe House in September and enjoyed working with and getting to know other volunteers as well as learning about Northern Ireland and peace and reconciliation.



*Volunteers at Glebe House*

We launched the IVP programme in early spring with the publication of the VSI book 'Volunteering 2008' and making the programme and search engine available on the SCI website. We held Info Evenings in Dublin and Cork. Continuing the promotion of VSI through the year we held stands

at various fairs in universities, colleges and at festivals and we gave presentations at conferences and for organisations.

IVP ran Preparation, Evaluation and Child Protection Training sessions for volunteers going abroad. These provided opportunities for them to plan and reflect on their volunteer projects as well as meeting and finding out about other volunteers from 2008.

We organised projects with our Host organisations around Ireland at the beginning of the year. We placed a hundred and thirty-eight volunteers and supported our partner organisations to host them between May and October. IVP volunteers and staff travelled around Ireland welcoming volunteers, meeting hosts and evaluating projects with international volunteers.



*Volunteer in Finland*

### **Thanks**

The staff and volunteers of the Host organisations in Ireland, both north and south, have been fantastic; looking after the volunteers, supporting them in their work, making sure they have a good time and that they learn about Ireland.

IVP Committee members in 2008 were: Barbara Bertocini, Anne Dooley, Ken Doyle, Laura Duggan, Diego Gallagher, Emmet Griffin (special thanks to Emmet for coordinating the project in Mosney), Melanie Gutman and Manus Rooney (we said goodbye to Manus in the summer who is now working abroad, special thanks to you for all your hard work over the years). Others who helped in various ways over the year include Paddy Anderson, Laura Baccolini, Michael Cresham, Kelly Fogarty, Cian Doherty, Louise Harrington, Conor Mongey, Aisling Twohill and members of the VSI National Committee.

Our project in the Mosney Refugee Accommodation Centre was supported by the Community

Foundation for Ireland and the Katherine Howard Foundation.

We would like to thank all the above for the help and support they have given us over the year, the programme could not have happened without you.

*“Working as part of a team with the other SCI volunteers meant that we became quite close, and really got to know one another.*

*Once our shift in the kitchen was finished each day, the Greek volunteers were more than willing to discuss with us in English and I made many friends during my time there, I even changed my flight dates so that I could visit an island with some of them at the end of camp!”*

**Niamh, VSI volunteer in Greece**



***Niamh with the volunteer group in Greece***

*“For me, it is impossible to talk about Azerbaijan at any great length without also talking about volunteering for VSI. I don’t think that there is any other way I could have gotten to know and love Azerbaijan so well without the help of AYAFE, my host organization there, who took such good care of me and ensured that I was warmly welcomed in to a community of people who could teach me more than I ever dreamed of knowing about Azerbaijan, its people and culture. With their help I and the other volunteers travelled all over the country, getting to know the traditional culture - the food, the music, the language - as well as contemporary culture, politics and society, but we also got to experience what life is like for Azerbaijani people, and see the world through their eyes.”*

**Sinead Walsh, VSI volunteer in Azerbaijan**



**Sinead with some of the young people in Azerbaijan**

*“This workcamp assisted in the ongoing developmental work of Glebe House in promoting its aims within a wider international field.”*

**Glebe House Centre for Peace and Reconciliation**



**Volunteers in Glebe House, summer 2008**

*“There is a deeper understanding of cultures and disabilities when international volunteers, national volunteers and participants live and work together, sharing information, skills, knowledge and fun.”*

**Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus**



*“It’s a great help to get this work done and socially it’s a wonderful opportunity to get to know people from different walks of life.”*



**Ballybay Camphill Community**

### **Plans for 2009**

In 2009 we will continue to work with our current hosts in Ireland, north and south and will continue to send volunteers to projects abroad. We will develop and expand the programme in Ireland, we will build on the work we do and on our relationships with partners both in Ireland and abroad. We will develop a programme with people with disabilities, to offer volunteering opportunities in Ireland and internationally.

## Overview of IVP Projects in Ireland 2008

HOST	WORK CARRIED OUT	COUNTY	MONTH	VOLS
<b>REPUBLIC OF IRELAND</b>				
<b>BALLYBAY</b> Camphill Ballybay is one of 60 Camphill communities around the world and one of 14 in Ireland, offering those in need of special care a sheltered environment in which their educational, therapeutic and social needs can be met.	Fruit-picking and general gardening	Monaghan	July-Aug	5
<b>BALLYTOBIN</b> A Camphill Community – see above.	Making a woodland footpath	Kilkenny	October	6
<b>BROTHERS OF CHARITY</b> Largest provider of services for people with an intellectual disability in Ireland. Inclusion is a fundamental principle that underlies all aspects of their work.	Carrying out activities with children and adults with intellectual disabilities	Clare	July / Aug / Aug	3 / 2 / 2
<b>CUISLE</b> The Irish Wheelchair Association is dedicated to the achievement of full social, economic and educational integration of people with physical disabilities as equal, independent and participative members of the community. The IWA hosts holidays for their members and other groups at Cuisle, their purpose built centre.	Socialising and interacting with guests holidaying at Cuisle	Roscommon	December 07/ April-May / June-July / July-August / August-September	3 / 1 / 4 / 2 / 3
<b>GLENSTAL ABBEY</b> Benedictine monastery working to preserve and promote ecological balance in its 500 acre estate.	Woodland conservation	Limerick	June-July / July	8 / 12
<b>IRISH ASSOCIATION FOR SPINA BIFIDA AND HYDROCEPHALUS</b> National association for the care, welfare, interest, treatment, education, advancement and rehabilitation of persons born with Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus.	Helping participants in skills of daily living and taking part in the 'Summer Independence Training Project'	Dublin	June / July / July / July / August	2 / 1 / 2 / 3 / 6

<p><b>MOSNEY</b> Refugee Accommodation Centre providing housing for almost 700 residents from 50 different countries seeking asylum in Ireland. There are approximately 100 children aged 4 – 12 years resident in Mosney.</p>	<p>Running a Summer Activity Camp for the children</p>	<p>Meath</p>	<p>August</p>	<p>12</p>
<p><b>SONAIRTE</b> Interactive visitor centre promoting ecological awareness and sustainable living.</p>	<p>Building maintenance, gardening, working in Eco-shop, harvesting apples</p>	<p>Meath</p>	<p>June / July-August / September / October</p>	<p>1 / 5 / 5 / 6</p>
<p><b>SUNRISE EDUCATION TRUST</b> International education trust focussing on attaining inner and outer peace through voluntary work and cooperative development.</p>	<p>Planting and maintaining gardens and construction of buildings using sustainable methods at an organic farm</p>	<p>Clare</p>	<p>June / August</p>	<p>4 / 7</p>
<p><b>NORTHERN IRELAND</b></p>				
<p><b>BARCROFT COMMUNITY CENTRE</b> Community Centre working with local people in a housing estate in Newry. This project was the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Summer Scheme for children and young people age 6 - 18 years.</p>	<p>Organising games, arts and crafts and helping out with excursions and sporting events</p>	<p>Co. Down</p>	<p>July-August</p>	<p>7</p>
<p><b>GLEBE HOUSE</b> Glebe House is a community residential centre for young people, children and adults from catholic and protestant communities. It aims to provide a positive experience for people to understand different viewpoints and experience alternatives to violence and conflict and ways of living in peace.</p>	<p>Maintenance work around the centre and farm, including painting and decorating, gardening, cleaning and work on the playground</p>	<p>Co. Down</p>	<p>September</p>	<p>12</p>
<p><b>TOOLS FOR SOLIDARITY</b> Tools for Solidarity collects, refurbishes and ships out old and unwanted hand tools and sewing machines to skilled trades-people, organisations, crafts-people and vocational schools in Africa.</p>	<p>Preparation for shipment of sewing machines and equipment to projects in Tanzania</p>	<p>Belfast</p>	<p>July-August</p>	<p>5</p>

## DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

### AFRICA, ASIA, LATIN AMERICA and MIDDLE EAST PROGRAMME

In 2008 VSI enabled 52 volunteers to join our Development Education programme to International Volunteer Projects in Africa, (Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia) Asia (India,

Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam), Middle East (Israel, Palestine, Syria). Many of the participants took part in 2 or more volunteer projects during their stay in the country.

The programme involved:

- **Introductory Workshops** in Cork and Dublin (3) in February (200 people attended)
- A **World Development Weekend Workshop** in Greystones, Co. Wicklow in early March which included sessions on Debt and Development; Water Issues in Latin America, The Aids crisis in Uganda (45 people attended)
- A **World Development Weekend Workshop** in Greystones in May focussing on several development themes as well as covering Health and practical issues (25 people attended)
- A 1 day **Development Issues Workshop** in May in Dublin, which included presentations by participants on development issues they had researched as part of their preparation. We also organised sessions on culture and global tourism. (25 people)
- A 1 day **Evaluation Workshop** in Dublin in October with a special input from John Woods from the Tools for Solidarity group in Belfast. (25 people). This was a lively and enjoyable workshop with a vast array of stories from a wide range of volunteering experiences.

*"I gained a good insight into life in a Tanzanian community. I learned to appreciate how rich and warm people can be despite their meagre means. Although the digging of the foundations was useful to the community, the real experience was much deeper and on a human level."*  
**Klara, volunteer in Tanzania**



**Explaining Ireland to Tanzanian students**



**Environmental project near Kandy,  
Sri Lanka Summer 08**

*"I learned a lot about Sri Lanka and its people, especially the colonial parallels with Ireland. There is a crying need for the international community to involve itself and initiate a viable peace process in Sri Lanka before it is too late."*

**Kevin , volunteer in Sri Lanka**

### **Incoming Volunteers**

Due to visa problems VSI were unable to host any incoming volunteers this year.

### **Health and Safety Handbook**

Some progress was made on developing a health and safety handbook for all outgoing volunteers. This will be ready for the next preparation sessions in Spring 2009.

### **Africa Working Group**

VSI continues to play an active role in the SCI Africa Working Group. Tom Ryder attended the annual meeting in Belgium in October, which was attended by several other SCI branches -Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Slovenia, Spain, Catalonia and four partner organisations from Kenya, Tanzania, Togo and Zambia. The meeting:

- Evaluated the current programme with partners throughout Africa. This year 180 SCI volunteers took part in projects with our partners in Africa
- Shared information about solidarity and development education projects
- Agreed the incoming volunteers for 2009
- Developed a wikipedia site for the working group

In addition to the Africa Working Group meeting we had several joint sessions with the SCI Latin America Group (Abya Yala), the SCI Middle East working group and the newly emerging Asia Working Group. A more detailed report of the meetings is available from the VSI office.



**Volunteers on an environmental project in Ghana**

## Networking

Tom Ryder represents VSI on the **Dochas Development Education Group**. Their main activities during 2008 were:

- Promoting the code of conduct for NGO's on Images and Development.
- Maintaining links to European and Irish networks
- Researching the use of new technologies in development education

Tom Ryder represents VSI on the Comhlamh **Volunteering Options Working Group**.

This group has 2 main activities:  
- The development Good Practice Code for sending organizations

- The development of a Volunteer Charter for all volunteers going to work in developing countries

The group has met several times during the year and has held workshops on issues of common concern e.g. health and safety of volunteers; insurance; etc

The **VSI Development Education Group** members are; Anne Payne, Claire Ducept, Annette Duffy, Elaine Duffy, Anne Mc Kiernan, Sarah Quinn, Jenny Black, Larry Doyle, Tom Ryder. Also thanks to the Cork people – Arran Towers and Louise Harrington. Thanks also to Anna Landy in Limerick.

*Volunteers and local people take a break from building a classroom -for the local community in Zanzibar, Tanzania*



## LONG TERM VOLUNTEERING

VSI enabled eleven volunteers to take part in long term voluntary service projects during 2008. Many of the projects came under the EU Youth Programme – European Voluntary Service (EVS) – that is open to 18-30 year olds and the EU pays all costs.

The Long Term Exchange Group of SCI publishes a vacancy list every two months (available from the VSI web pages), which gives details of projects in many European countries, North America and a smaller number in Africa, Asia or Latin America.

Some of the vacancies fall under the EVS programme. Long Term Volunteer reports and vacancy lists can be seen on the VSI WebPages [www.vsi.ie](http://www.vsi.ie)



*EVS participant in Germany*

### LONTG TERM VOLUNTEERS WITH VSI 2008

**Peter Collins** continued his work on youth and community projects in Kosovo until May 2008.

**Kieran Quigley** worked on youth and community projects with Balkan Sunflowers in Kosovo from February to September 08.

**Antonia Karpova** worked on an after school project in a disadvantaged area of Barcelona, Spain until April 08

**Amy Fox** is working with an arts and cultural project in Salzburg, Austria for 1 year.

**Fiona Shannon** worked on an eco project in Graz, Austria for 3 months in 2008.

**Jennie Corbett** started work on the Mayors for Peace project in Ypres, Belgium in July 08 for 1 year.

**Laura Travers** worked on a Whale and Dolphin project in Wales from May to September.

**Michael Donohue** is working with the Jesuit Refugee Services in Belgium for 1 year.

**Paul Fallon** is working with a centre for sexual and gender diversity in Palestinian society in Jerusalem for 6 months.

**Tommy Durcan** is working on a Black Vulture conservation project in Majorca, Spain for 8 months.

**Stephen Clarke** worked on an arts and culture project in Porto, Portugal for 6 weeks.

**Etienne Corish** worked in a school for young people with disabilities in Kassel, Germany for 8 months.

*' I am working in a school for children with special needs in Kassel, a town in the centre of Germany. I am in a class room with eight children, six of whom don't need individual help and two of which who do. I am taking care of one boy who is autistic who*

*needs individual help. I am always with him and help him with school work, eating and take him out of the class when he is too loud. The children in the class are between 14 and 16 years old and in the school from 5 up to 19 years old.*



*"Before I came I had no experience working with people with special needs but the staff in the school are very nice and everything has gone very well and I have learned a lot. I had studied German for 5 years up until my Leaving Cert so language was not a big problem when I arrived. It has gotten a lot better since I am here though. I live in an apartment with six other volunteers. They are also doing their voluntary work in Kassel and are doing all sorts of work. German is the common language among us as the other volunteers are from Spain,*

*Estonia, Hungary, Greece and Russia. The ages in the apartment range from 19 up to 26 years old. The on arrival training I did was very interesting. I got to see new parts of Germany and got to know a lot of other European volunteers doing their projects in Germany. I will be doing my mid term training seminar in June. My experience so far has been very satisfactory and I would recommend it to anyone searching to learn new things and experience something new."*

**Etienne, EVS in Germany**

## DUBLIN LOCAL GROUP

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The Dublin Local Group (DLG) of VSI undertakes to improve the living conditions of the elderly, disabled and marginalised in the Dublin local community. The work we undertake is normally referred to us by Vincent de Paul, Friends of the Elderly, Care Local and the Social Work Departments of Dublin City Council, the Health Service Executive and all hospitals in the Dublin City Area.

We mainly try to help out in situations where the living standard of a person or family has fallen well below the general standard and where they are neither in a financial nor physical position to help themselves. The type of work we normally do involves painting, wall papering, small repairs and some cleaning.

There are currently around 12 active members in the DLG. We meet each Saturday morning, which is when our work takes place. We have a meeting after every job to discuss current issues and to visit new projects. We have volunteers from all parts of the world in our group. There are a few social evenings organised during the year as well.

So far this year we have received more than 30 requests for assistance. We have assessed nearly all of these and undertaken and completed 10. These projects have taken place all across the city and were very varied: it included work such as painting the upstairs and downstairs of a house in

Darndale, the painting of a meeting room & 2 volunteer's bedrooms in Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation (Co Wicklow) and for the first time we did a "family project" this year where we redecorated the bedroom of a lady living in Crumlin and the living room of her parents based in Drimnagh! The hardest job we did this year was painting the inside of a huge barn for Camphill in Jerpoint, Co. Kilkenny; we literally spent 3 days on ladders and scaffoldings to complete the project. We hope to complete another 1 project before the year's end.



*Painting at Jerpoint Camphill Community*

One main objective recently has been the redesign of the DLG website. We will be able soon to share a new & improved version of it with everyone and we hope it will be even more successful in term of visits than the previous one.

More details on the group can be found on our website [www.dublinlocalgroup.org](http://www.dublinlocalgroup.org) or you can email us at [dlg@dublinlocalgroup.org](mailto:dlg@dublinlocalgroup.org).

## TEENAGE PROGRAMME

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The Teenage Programme worked with over 40 young people in the past year, including early school leavers; separated children seeking asylum; members of the travelling community; young people from residential care; and other young people who have not had the opportunity to access VSI's programmes in the past. We organised volunteer days, residential volunteering weekends and other activities to introduce these young people to the values and aims of VSI.

### Youth Exchanges

Youth Exchanges organised by VSI are one of the main activities of the Teenage Programme, as they allow the young people to take part in a residential project that fully combines a non-formal and informal approach to peace education, as well as a first-hand experience with a volunteering project. These exchanges are an important tool in the development of the young person's social and personal skills, as well as an introduction to the values of VSI through the experience of living in an intercultural environment for a short period of time.

This was a particularly busy year in the Teenage Programme, with groups of participants taking part in seven different exchanges in 2008, along with their leaders and groups from other branches of SCI. All the youth exchanges were partially funded by the European

Commission's Youth in Action Programme.

VSI took part in a new project in Southern Catalunya in June, which involved the young people taking part in a volunteering project to reclaim the bunkers from the front-line of the Spanish Civil War, in the tiny village of Vallbona de les Monges. The young people learned about the war, and explored issues connected to conflict, while also hearing about local people's first-hand experiences of the war.

We hosted two exchanges in Ireland this year for the first time – the first taking place in Cork and exploring Sustainable Living, and the second exploring the theme of Peace and Conflict and taking place in Durrow Abbey, Co Offaly. The Sustainable Living project involved the young people in a natural building project as well as workshops on various aspects of sustainable living, while living on a 250-acre organic farm outside Macroom.



*Cork Youth Exchange, Cob building*

Through the Peace and Conflict project, the young people designed and built a “peace garden” on the grounds of Durrow Abbey, and explored issues of personal conflict and global citizenship with the help of a volunteer from Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation.



*Youth participants in the peace garden*

VSI also sent groups to two other exchanges in July and August – the Cloud in Love project in Brussels, where the young people worked with children from local migrant communities; and to a nature conservation project in Gela, Sicily.

In August, VSI sent a group to De Sterrenwijzer Project, Olen, Belgium, for the third year running. This time the young people helped organise a medieval festival for local children, while staying in this Rudolf Steiner Centre for Elderly people. There were twenty young people from Bulgaria, France, Italy and Ireland involved in this exchange.

The final project of the summer was Raval through the Lens, and for the second year running Irish teenagers spent one week exploring the theme of immigration in the district of Raval, Barcelona and produced a final exhibition of photography on the subject.

## **Leader Training**

The Teenage Programme relies on the energy and expertise of its team of volunteer youth leaders to organise the programme activities. As a result they encourage their volunteers to take up the opportunity for further training. This year, we sent 7 volunteers to the SCI Youth Leader Training in Brussels, for this 4-day training on leadership skills, quality of youth exchanges, and to learn about working with the target group of the Teenage Programme. The Teenage Programme Coordinator and a VSI volunteer were both members of the training team and helped organise and deliver the training for over 50 people.



*Leadership Game in Brussels*

## **YUWG**

VSI is an active member of SCI's working group of YUWG, which aims to make the activities of SCI more accessible to young people with fewer opportunities. It is within this framework that youth exchanges and other projects involving the cooperation of various branches of SCI happens. In 2008 YUWG hosted two meetings and seminars – the first in Poland in April and the second in France in November. Both meetings gave VSI and the other branches of SCI working with this

target group the opportunity to evaluate their work, and plan new projects and developments for 2009.

### Thank you

A huge thank you to the fantastic leaders and volunteers of 2008: Paul Coughlan, Leanne Hyland, Aisling Moroney, Sarah-anne Bennett, Johnny O'Rourke Ruth Coughlan, Conor Mongey, Yaser Alashqar, Siobhan Hussmann, Mary Henderson, Tony Page, Ruth Ennis. The Teenage Programme staff team

for 2008 was Grace Walsh and Elena Ferro (EVS).



*Phoenix Festival, Tullamore, County Offaly.*

### Peace Activists Project

VSI was very happy to organise and coordinate the Causeway Project in September 2008, in Northern Ireland, with the cooperation of Tides Mediation Training, Kilcranny House and the Corrymeela Community. This novel project brought together 24 young people from Israel/Palestine, the ROI and NI to explore the conflict in Israel / Palestine in the context of the N. Irish Peace Process.

All the participants in this 10-day residential project work or volunteer with NGO's or community-based organisations, or have experience and knowledge of the conflict through their studies or personal circumstances.

The project aimed to give activists and practitioners in the field of peace-building the opportunity to learn skills from those working in peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland; to reflect on methods and practices they are currently engaging in and to create a network of practitioners involved in work in Israel / Palestine and therefore the opportunity for follow-up projects and future cooperation. The young people from Israel / Palestine included those working and volunteering for such organisations as B'tselem, Windows for Peace, Breaking the Silence and Sadaka Reut.



*Wassim, Scandar and Jabali, Palestinian participants of the Causeway Project, are made to feel at home in Derry City.*



*Volunteers Evaluation workshop 2008*

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