

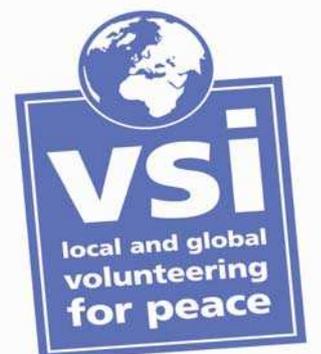
VSI Annual Report 2009



Voluntary Service International

www.vsi.ie

VSI is a non profit organisation
Registered Charity no. 9220 CHY



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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

Margaret Brannigan - Administrator

Claudie Mourcely - EVS Volunteer, Teenage Programme

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National Committee

The 2008 AGM was held in the Airfield Trust, Dundrum, Co. Dublin in late November. Thirty members were present at the meeting and along with the formal AGM held a series of workshops on VSI priorities for 2009.

The AGM elected a new National Committee (NC). They were –Elaine Duffy, Sarah Ann Bennett, Cian Doherty, Laura Ni Fhláibhin, Sorcha Tormey. Sinead Stack was co-opted to the National Committee in June through Boardmatch Ireland.

VSI has achieved a huge amount over the past year and there have been many highlights :

- The successful hosting of the International Committee Meeting of SCI in Glencree, Co. Wicklow in December with over 50 delegates from 25 branches worldwide.
- The organisation of new volunteer projects in Midleton, Co. Cork and Newry, Co. Down.
- The involvement of 200 volunteers from over 30 countries on our International Volunteer Projects Programme in Ireland.
- Placing 180 volunteers on projects in 50 countries worldwide including Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.
- The joint VSI/ ECO Unesco Peer Education training seminar in Greystones, Co. Wicklow at Easter.
- The involvement of 60 young people with less opportunities on our Teenage Programme.
- Peace Education inputs on many projects this summer.
- The tremendous work of the Dublin Local Group with their painting and decorating projects for elderly people.
- The introduction of on line applications and payments on our website.
- The joint publication with IVS GB of our International Volunteer Projects Book in March.
- The successful funding application for a pilot project to involve volunteers over 50 with a partner in the Czech Republic.

A more detailed summary can be found in the reports which follow.

Northern Ireland

VSI took over the responsibility of running International Volunteer Projects in Northern Ireland and placing volunteers from there following the closure of the IVS NI office in October 2006. In 2009 we organised 3 projects with Glebe House, Tools for Solidarity and Barcroft Community in Newry. In addition we met with several other groups to discuss possible cooperation. VSI also place several medium term volunteers with Glebe House.

Staff

Tom Ryder (VSI Co-ordinator), Helen Walmsley (IVP Development Officer), Grace Walsh (Teenage Programme Co-ordinator), Margaret Brannigan (Office Administrator), Claudie Mourcely are the current staff team. The National Committee would like to express gratitude to the staff team who over the year have approached their work in a professional and enthusiastic manner. We recognise that sometimes there are difficulties in working in this area but want to take this opportunity to state that all efforts made in 2009 by all stakeholders will be fully supported by the NC.

Thanks also to Sheila King who finished her 3 year term with VSI in June and Matteo Fastigi who returned to Italy in June following his 4 month EVS project.

The NC would also like to acknowledge the effort that volunteers put into VSI and thank them for their time and energy in 2009.



VSI AGM 2008 participants

International Volunteer Projects

This year the International Volunteer Projects (IVP) programme hosted a total of one hundred and forty-nine volunteers from twenty-eight different countries on projects in Ireland. Of these, one hundred and thirty volunteers took part in twenty-four projects in the Republic, and nineteen volunteers in three projects in Northern Ireland. Eighty-three volunteers from Ireland took part in IVP projects with us in twenty-eight different countries. These volunteers worked in a variety of areas including the environment, work with children, disabled people and young people and arts and culture. This year eleven volunteers chose to stay in Ireland to volunteer, a larger number than usual. Of the volunteers going abroad, Spain was the most popular destination with fourteen volunteers choosing it; thirteen volunteers went to ever popular Italy. Other top destination countries for our volunteers this year were Germany (10) and Russia (9).

We launched the IVP programme in early spring with the publication of the VSI book 'Volunteering 2009' and the launch of the 2009 project search engine. We held Info events in Dublin and Cork. Continuing the promotion of VSI through the year we ran stands at various fairs in universities, colleges and at festivals and we gave presentations at conferences and to organisations.

IVP ran Preparation, Evaluation and Child Protection Training sessions for our outgoing volunteers. Volunteers and staff travelled around Ireland welcoming volunteers, meeting hosts and evaluating projects with international volunteers.

Thanks

IVP Committee members in 2009 were: Nohema Aparicio-Polo Velazquez, Laura Duggan, Diego Gallagher, Emmet Griffin, Melanie Gutman, Silvia Schmidt and Sinead Walsh.

Others who helped in various ways over the year include Paddy Anderson, Mary Daly, Anne Dooley, Laura Baccolini, Louise Harrington, Beatrix Lafosse, Brian McNulty, Kevin McParland, Silvia Schmidt, Arran Towers, Dave Quinlan, Brian Dillon and members of the VSI National Committee. Extra special thanks to Ruth Kennington for all her help opening and closing projects around Ireland and helping out in the office.

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.

Emmet Griffin, Sarah McFadden and Claire McNamara coordinated projects at the Refugee Accommodation Centre in Mosney. Sinead Walsh coordinated the volunteers at KnockanStockan and Laura Duggan supported the Tools for Solidarity project in Belfast. Thanks to the KnockanStockan group for running a fundraiser for us with the highest number of raffle prizes ever!! Thanks to the Katherine Howard Foundation for their generous support of the Mosney projects.

A huge thank you to all the above for the help and support you have given us over the year, the programme could not have happened without you.

Plans for 2010

In 2010 we will continue to work with our current hosts in Ireland 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 further develop our programme with people with disabilities, offering volunteering opportunities in Ireland and internationally.

Lorena Lampedecchia was in Roscigno, Italy

I volunteered for two weeks in a small village in the Cilento National Park in southern Italy (Salerno). We were involved in an environmental project that consisted of cleaning up the area of an old abandoned village to enhance its historical and environmental value and prepare it for two nights of a music festival. In the mornings we used to go down to the abandoned village and collect rubbish, cut the grass, collect dead leaves and do small restoration jobs around the main square. In the afternoon and evening we enjoyed just chatting together and being part of the local community. There was no real programme for visits or trips and we discovered the place



The Roscigno volunteer group with the tiramisu that they made for their hosts on the last day

thanks to the locals' improvisation and initiative whose welcome was very warm. I really loved this aspect of the experience as everyday was a surprise and it reflected the local lifestyle. During this experience I gained a great insight into people and the local community. I observed how small conflicts are mainly caused by our stubbornness and holding on to our reasons and convictions. And I have seen how we can enrich each other and create a real community spirit by just dropping those barriers and listening and communicating with each other. The experience was unique and I now feel that I can't embark on a real journey unless I'm involved in another volunteer project!

Volunteering in Russia – a great experience to remember Garrett Mullan

I spent two weeks at the Sodrujestvo Intercultural Summer Camp just outside the city of Cheboxary 600km east of Moscow. The setting was idyllic, an old camp in dense forest



young people and was supported by a team of both local Russian and six foreign volunteers.

A typical day at the camp started at 8am with morning

at the bank of the river Volga.. Cheboxary is a provincial city and

although Chuvashia has a long and rich history, not so many foreigners visit. That's why there is not a lot of possibilities for youngsters to meet other cultures and have international friends. Sodrujestvo is trying to fill that gap. Driven volunteers Sodrujestvo has a number of projects including a partnership with a local orphanage, an ecology project, language classes and works in general to promote the idea of active citizenship on the part of young people. The camp was attended by 30

Some of the young people taking part in the Sodrujestvo Intercultural Summer Camp

exercises followed by 9am breakfast with lessons at 10am. Lessons

included English, Polish, Slovenian, French and Russian for me on occasion. Other activities included country presentations. The foreign volunteers gave presentations on Poland, Ukraine, Slovenia, Belgium and in my case Ireland. Each day was packed with activities from strategy games in the woods to master classes in bracelet making, Polish and Belgian dancing, football, Gaelic football and volleyball. The children had great fun and the camp was a experience to remember.

These stories have been edited, please go to www.vsi.ie for full version

Overview of IVP Projects in Ireland 2009

HOST	WORK CARRIED OUT	COUNTY	MONTH
<p>REPUBLIC OF IRELAND</p>			
<p>BALLYBAY 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.</p>	<p>Fruit-picking and general gardening</p>	<p>Monaghan</p>	<p>July-Aug</p>
<p>BALLYTOBIN A Camphill Community – see above.</p>	<p>Making a woodland footpath</p>	<p>Kilkenny</p>	<p>October</p>
<p>CUISLE 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.</p>	<p>Socialising and interacting with guests holidaying at Cuisle</p>	<p>Roscommon</p>	<p>December 08 / March / April / May / June / July / August /</p>
<p>IRISH ASSOCIATION FOR SPINA BIFIDA AND HYDROCEPHALUS - SHINE National association for the care, welfare, interest, treatment, education, advancement and rehabilitation of persons born with Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus.</p>	<p>Helping participants in skills of daily living and taking part in the 'Summer Independence Training Project'</p>	<p>Dublin</p>	<p>June / July x 2 / August x 2</p>
<p>KNOCKANSTOCKAN</p>	<p>Building and breaking down structures and clearing rubbish at an independent music festival</p>	<p>Wicklow</p>	<p>July x 2</p>

MIDLETON	Clearing plants and overgrowth from the courtyard and buildings, building a dry-stone wall and erecting a roof	Cork	August
MOSNEY 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.	Running a Summer Activity Camp for the children	Meath	July / August
SONAIRTE Interactive visitor centre promoting ecological awareness and sustainable living.	Building maintenance, gardening, working in Eco-shop, harvesting apples	Meath	June / July- August / August- September / October
SUNRISE EDUCATION TRUST International education trust focussing on attaining inner and outer peace through voluntary work and cooperative development.	Planting and maintaining gardens and construction of buildings using sustainable methods at an organic farm	Clare	August
NORTHERN IRELAND			
BARCROFT COMMUNITY CENTRE Community Centre working with local people in a housing estate in Newry. This project was the 20th annual Summer Scheme for children and young people age 6 - 18 years.	Organising games, arts and crafts and helping out with excursions and sporting events	Co. Down	July-August
GLEBE HOUSE 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.	Maintenance work around the centre and farm, including painting and decorating, gardening, cleaning and work on the playground	Co. Down	August- September
TOOLS FOR SOLIDARITY 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.	Preparation for shipment of sewing machines and equipment to projects in Tanzania	Belfast	July-August

Development Education

« I learnt what daily life is like for people living under occupation and how different people deal with this. Some campaign hard, fighting against the unjust system. Most are sad living a life that is a half life with no respect, no freedom of movement and no ability to improve their circumstances. »

Alice Ryan, volunteer in Palestine

Africa, Asia, Latin America and Middle East Programme

In 2009 VSI enabled 60 volunteers to join our Development Education programme to International Volunteer Projects in Africa (Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia); Asia (Bangladesh, Malaysia, Mongolia, Thailand and Vietnam); Latin America (Mexico); Middle East (Israel and Palestine). Many of the participants took part in 2 or more volunteer projects during their visit to a country/region.

The programme involved:

- Introductory Workshops in Belfast, Cork and Dublin (3) in February (200 people attended)
- A World Development Weekend Workshop in Greystones, Co. Wicklow in late March which included sessions on Debt and Development; Water Issues in Latin America, The Aids crisis in Uganda (40 people attended)
- A World Development Weekend Workshop in Greystones in May focussing on several development themes as well as covering Health and practical issues (35 people attended)
- A 1 day Development Issues Workshop in June in Dublin (15 people attended)
- A 1 day Evaluation Workshop in Dublin in October with an input from Johnny Sheehan from NYCI on Development Education (30 people). This was a lively and enjoyable workshop with a vast array of stories from a wide range of volunteering experiences. The group has revised the evaluation form for the programme

Incoming Volunteers

VSI hosted Jamal Mikidadi from Tanzania for one month during August. Jamal took part in projects with Sunrise Farm in Co. Clare, Cuisle in Co. Roscommon as well as visiting other organizations in Dublin and Meath.

« I really enjoyed the work camp, I got to see and experience a rural local way of living in Bangladesh. The trip to and from camp site was a real joy too! That boat trip was a unique experience I will remember! The local volunteers were so nice and helpful and they took really good care of us internationals! We grew into a little family together. Thanks to them all! I feel I've made friends and memories I will treasure for life. Last I want to say that no where else than here in Bangladesh have I been welcomed and hosted with such hospitality and caring! SCI Bangladesh has looked after me so well, I've felt at home. SCI BD members have made my stay here in Bangladesh a very special and happy one.»

Anu Helin, volunteer in Bangladesh

Volunteers Health and Safety Handbook

We produced 100 copies of the Health and Safety Handbook for volunteers and all outgoing volunteers received a copy. We are now adding some extra sections and will print 500 copies in January 2010.

Research Project with former volunteers

The group has undertaken a research project (Survey Monkey on Google) with former volunteers (2004-2008) over the past month. 60 participants have responded and the group will analyse the feedback and make a summary report for Irish Aid who provide funding for the programme.

Africa Working Group

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

- Evaluated the current programme with partners throughout Africa. This year 200 SCI volunteers took part in projects with our partners in Africa
- Shared information about solidarity and development education projects
- Agreed the incoming volunteers for 2010
- 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.



Going to work, Mwange, Tanzania

Networking

Tom Ryder represents VSI on the Dochas Development Education Group. Their main activities during 2009 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 of a Volunteer Charter for all volunteers going to work in developing countries
- the development of a Code of Good Practice for sending organisations

The group has met several times during the year and has held workshops on issues of common concern e.g. Child protection, 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, Roisin Traynor, Larry Doyle, Tom Ryder. Also thanks to the Cork people – Arran Towers and Louise Harrington. Thanks also to Anna Landy in Limerick.

« The volunteer experience taught me so much. Firstly; how to adapt to a totally different way of life, out of my own comfort zone, and so enabling me to appreciate how others live. I learned to communicate with people from many different backgrounds and cultures simultaneously. I saw how people can be so content in their way of life, even if at first I thought it was very secluded and underprivileged, but after the initial culture shock I quickly became accustomed and began to appreciate the villagers' contentment in their



way of life. The whole experience really did make me become more open minded, less materialistic and appreciate all the small things. I learned how to live in an environment.

I fell in love with the place; we were treated with so much warmth and kindness in our community, such a humbling experience. The locals were always so generous with what little they had from inviting us to visit their houses and families or the children always offering us fruit or inviting us to play with them.

Overall it was an experience I will definitely never forget, I unquestionably got out of the experience what I was hoping for and more! It has left me with the desire to do many more volunteer projects, and cannot wait to do so! »

Mary Madden, volunteer in Tanzania

Long Term Volunteering

VSI enabled eleven volunteers to take part in long term voluntary service projects during 2009. Many of the projects came under the EU Youth Programme – European Voluntary Service (EVS) – which is open to 18-30 year olds and all costs are paid by the EU.

Amy Fox completed her EVS project with an arts and cultural project in Salzburg, Austria in December 08

Jennie Corbett completed her EVS project with the Mayors for Peace project in Ypres, Belgium in July.

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

Sinead Walsh is volunteering with a project working with street children in Perm, Russia

Una Timlin is volunteering at a special school in eastern Ukraine.

Louise Smyth has started her EVS project in Magdeburg in eastern Germany working on a range of youth projects with a local organisation.

Melina Diver continues her volunteering at an animal rescue sanctuary in Ostend, Belgium.

Paddy O Hanlon is volunteering with WWOOF Bulgaria.

Leah Sullivan is volunteering at the Spafford Children's Home in Jerusalem, Israel.

Jade Cuthbert will volunteer for 6 months starting in December at a special school near Athens in Greece.

Candy Fok is volunteering at the Gruiesbalm organic farming project in the Alps near Lucerne, Switzerland.

VSI were able to place several long-term volunteers from Japan, Croatia, Italy for 3-4 months at the Glebe House project in Co. Down during the summer.

VSI is a recognised sending organisation for the EVS programme. 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. There are many volunteer reports on the VSI web site.

Mayors for Peace, Belgium EVS Project

The work I was doing with Mayors for Peace was a hugely important part of the experience for me. As we were such a small team, I was given great responsibility and space to learn and develop. A lot of my work was in preparing reports, campaign materials, website content and correspondence but I also personally launched the first 2020 Vision Campaign drive in the Republic of Ireland. With Mayors for Peace, I went to numerous events and conferences at European Parliament in Brussels as well as to the UN Headquarters in New York last May. I was given amazing opportunities there that I know will stand to me in the future. Other parts of my EVS experience were just as important. I was working with

an international team. Thanks to that, I managed to learn French without ever having intended to and travelled many times to France, staying with friends and seeing a different side to the country than I ever had before. I made close friends that are scattered across Spain, Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands and France that I'll always have. As well as that, living with Belgian people in a home-stay and travelling to friends I met through work and the EVS network, I feel I really got a taste for Belgian culture and people. It was a place I knew nearly nothing about before my EVS, but now it's a place I'm doing everything in my power to get back to! Jenny Corbett



Jenny Corbett at the UN

Dublin Local Group

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 10 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 about 27 requests for assistance.

We have assessed nearly all of these and undertaken and completed 7. It is slightly less than previous years which is partially explained by the fact that we had a few last minute cancellations from clients at the beginning of the year. And the jobs we have taken on have lasted more than usual, up to 8 weeks for some of them.

These projects have taken place all across the city and were very varied: it included work such as painting the kitchen, windows and front door of a nice lady in Crumlin, a one day very difficult cleaning job in a flat in Dublin 7 for a gentleman living with birds or a plastering job in a big house in Ballyfermot. The hardest job we did this year was in Rialto: we got rid of the wallpaper, filled holes, sanded and painted a bedroom and the living room. We also laid out new floors in both rooms as well as in the hallway.

Our future objective for the group in 2010 is to get bigger: more volunteers, more team leaders and more jobs.

More details on the group can be found on our website www.dublinlocalgroup.org or you can email us at dlg@dublinlocalgroup.org

TEENAGE PROGRAMME

The Teenage Programme worked with over 60 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, International youth exchanges and other activities to introduce these young people to the values and aims of VSI.

EASTER PROJECT

VSI, in partnership with ECO-Unesco, organised a residential voluntary project which took



place in Greystones, from the 6th to the 10th of April. This project involved 16 young people around the theme of sustainable living and consisted of different activities.

We organised some group games to increase the interaction of the group, to get them to know each other better and to foster a healthy dynamic in the group.

The locals people and the Greystones tidy town were very grateful for the work we did and they really appreciated the involvement of the young people in that local project. At the end of the week, the mayor of Greystones came to see us and

"I had a good moment here. Everyone is so friendly and funny, lovely place, lovely home in Wicklow".

thanks us. Each participant received a certificate from the town about the project they took part in.

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH EXCHANGES

International Youth Exchange organised by VSI are the principle activity 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.

Preparation weekend 2009:

A preparation weekend took place in June in Co. Wicklow where the participants were prepared for the exchanges they were going to take part in. Along with some practical

information they also took part in outdoors games and others team building activities to prepare themselves for the summer exchanges.

During the summer months of 2009, VSI Teenage Programme was involved in a number of unique and exciting youth projects here in Ireland, and around Europe. These projects allowed young people aged 16-21, from a variety of countries and backgrounds, to experience the spirit of volunteerism, as well as develop personal, inter-personal and social skills through non formal learning and peace education workshops. VSI ran two youth exchanges in Ireland and also sent groups of young volunteers to projects in Belgium, Italy and Spain.

In Belgium, the project took place in Ypres, a Flemish town who had been the location of the heaviest fighting during World War. The volunteers from Slovenia, Spain, Belgium and Ireland had spent 10 days learning about the history of Ypres and about the war in general and made a short film on the theme of the project.

In Italy, young people from Belgium, Slovakia, Italy and Ireland focused on the theme of water consumption but also about environment and the use of the resources. Different workshops on the theme took place and the group also volunteered for different projects such as cleaning a beach area, an old castle and painting murals in the local town.

In Spain, the project was called “knowing our environment” and the main theme was the environment, natural resources and rural life. This exchange took place in Vallbona de Las Monges, in Catalunya. The young volunteers explored this theme through workshops, games and activities, and voluntary work.

In Ireland, the first project took place in Wicklow around the theme of sustainable living. Groups from Spain, Italy, France and Ireland explored the topic on the grounds of An Carraig Dulrá, a permaculture project run as an example of self sufficiency and experiment in permaculture methods. They participated in workshops, games and activities on the environment and learned how to live in a more sustainable way (recycling, growing vegetables, reusing waste, etc...). The main project consisted of helping the people at Carraig Dulrá with the construction of an amphitheatre using dry stone walling technique. They also did some activities in the organic garden (cutting woods, weeding, protecting trees and so on).



« I've improved my spanish and french and I've learned something of Lingala and Nepali. I've been more open, more sociable ».

The second exchange was located in Downings, Co. Donegal and the project was on the theme of understanding conflict. The venue was the Donegal Peace Center, An Téach Bán which works in the area of peace and reconciliation.

« I wish that everyone can make this experience ».

The group learned about the history of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and had the chance to meet people who experienced the conflict in northern Ireland such as a group of young people from Derry from an interface community, and Jon McCourt, who witnessed the events of Bloody Sunday and has worked in community and reconciliation work for many years as a result. A series of workshops in peace education had also been organised as well as a lot of artistic workshops on the main topic allowing the participants to record their



experiences, impressions of peace in the world today and become “peace messengers” in their own communities. The focus of the project was allowing the young people to explore examples and ways of taking action for positive change in their communities. We hope to reproduce all this work in a booklet in the coming months.

All these youth exchanges were co-funded by the Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission. A big thank to the following organisations for the financial and in-kind donations and support;

- Léargas
- The Community Foundation For Ireland
- The Donegal Peace Centre, An Téach Bán
- Peace III funding
- An Carraig Dúlra
- Croney Byrne Holiday Accommodation
- Jabba Jabba Jembe

Evaluation weekend

In September 2009 took place an evaluation weekend in Greystones where all the teenage programme participants for 2009 were gathered to speak about their experiences. It was an opportunity to express themselves about what they had learned during this summer but also to exchange their feelings and think a little bit about what they would like to do next year within VSI Teenage programme.

LEADER TRAINING

The Teenage Programme relies on the energy and expertise of its team of volunteer youth leaders to organise the project. As a result they encourage their volunteers to take up the opportunity for future training. This year, we sent 5 volunteers to the SCI Youth Leader Training in Greece this year, 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 25 people.

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 2009, YUWG host two meetings and seminars – the first meeting took place in Sicily in April and the second will take place in Ireland in December. Both meetings give 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 the future.

THANK YOU

A huge thank you to the fantastic leaders and volunteers of 2008;
Yaser Alashqar, Sarah-anne Bennett, Ailbhe Dervan, Mary Henderson, Leanne Hyland, Armin Krautgasser, Cormac Lally, Ciara McCorley, Conor Mongey, Claudie Mourcely, Aisling Moroney, Johnny O'Rourke.



Volunteers from the Teenage Programme in Donegal

THANKS TO

All our volunteers, activists and committee members

Sponsoring and Co-operating organisations

- Youth Affairs Section of the Dept. of Education and Science via National Lottery
- Youth In Action Programme EU via Leargas
- Irish Aid
- FAS
- HSE
- Howlin and O'Rourke –auditors
- SCI Branches and the SCI International Secretariat

Teenage Programme thanks

- Eco-Unesco
- The Community Foundation for Ireland

International Volunteer Projects Programme thanks

- Katharine Howard Foundation



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