

AsianVoices

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Dear readers,

Welcome to the new edition of Asian Voices!

The theme of the issue is the happiest moment of your branch/group in 2011.

How can we describe happiness? Throughout this issue you will find quotations of happiness + pictures within the framework of SCI, illustrating happiness. To start with:

Laughter is the shortest distance between two people Victor Borge

Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself, way of thinking – Marcus Aurelius

You as contributor came up with happy moments, another level to illustrate happiness. They are described in the articles. Happy volunteers, happiness on organizational level, and all gladly working for a more peaceful world through SCI... The AV-team is happy too. In a short time-frame we received many articles for this issue, and sharing of experiences in the Asia-Pacific region will in our opinion contribute to a feeling of happiness. So, let's continue sharing!

One note extra: the happiest moment of Hong Kong group in 2011 is hopefully yet to come. They applied for official group-status within SCI for the upcoming ICM! We wish them good luck! Last but not least: happy reading!

Wilbert
on behalf of the editing team



I am happy, when I can dance for example (with my son at home or far away, at a SCI-seminar). I am also happy with a good cup of coffee in the morning.

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Volunteering in Sri Lanka

Visit to Blue Rose School, SCI, Kandy, Sri Lanka.

The Blue Rose School is an essential amenity for special needs children, run by extraordinary people. The six teachers are paid a minimum amount to provide a much-needed service for the most vulnerable of their society, and without which there would be nowhere for them to turn.



SCI runs projects all over Sri Lanka, for example in the eastern area where the problems of poverty and homelessness are almost overwhelming; this area has been devastated by the Tamil war, the Tsunami and flooding in the recent past. There are also affiliated projects they support, for example the Loving Mother Project and an environmental project in the Bamboo forest outside Kandy.

Our visit to Kandy in Sri Lanka took place from 18th August to 5th September 2011. During our stay we had a number of goals

- To offer assistance to the Blue Rose Special School in order to improve the conditions of the special needs children
- To help with SCI projects as appropriate or requested
- To experience Sri Lankan social lifestyle and cultural heritage.

We painted the fencing in a project in Mampitiya Hospital, Kandy for our first two days.

We initiated a project to paint the handrails around the SCI office and Blue Rose School complex and paint the floors and outer wall of the school. We were helped by the teachers, parents, some of the special needs children and local volunteers. We funded the provision of safety gates for the children's protection.

We helped with the Mushroom project, collecting, weighing and

bagging the mushrooms for sale. They have a ready market with the local hotels prepared to pay for the packed mushrooms.

We initiated a garden project with Mahanama, a local volunteer. We had brought seeds from Dublin (flowers and vegetables that would grow in this climate) and we weeded and cleared the garden in preparation for the planting of the seeds.

We visited one of the villages involved in the Loving Mother project located within the Kandy District. The project hosts a travelling workshop for village mothers to educate them in the areas of child-rearing, the environment and general hygiene.

We visited many temples and historical buildings/ruins in Sri Lanka; most particularly the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy and various historical temples within the Cultural Triangle area (Dambulla, Sigiriya, Polonnarawa and many of the temples in the Kandy region).

The SCI people looked after us extremely well, ensuring we visited all the areas of cultural and historic interest we wanted to see. The Sri Lankan people are a wonderful race and have a great sense of community under much financial adversity. We will never forget them and hope to be able to aid them into the future.

We had a fantastic experience that far exceeded our expectations and we would highly encourage volunteers to volunteer in this area.

By: Geraldine Canavan & Marie O Connor



Korea: Happy moments in new worksite

Especially in 2011, we have had lots of happy moments. **One of the happiest moment is that we found a great work site.** The **city of An-Sung** is located in the outskirts of Seoul, the capital of Korea.

The farmers had needed lots of help so we decided to go and develop surroundings. We are sincerely happy to give a help to people who lack of help. Furthermore, **their response is positive and they could get good quality of fruits and vegetable which are really fresh and delicious!!**

We wish to continue this good relationship with them and develop work camp for volunteers who want to experience Korea country culture. We are **looking forward to introducing volunteers this good work site!!** If you want to join it feel free to ask about it through **SCI-KOREA Facebook page or visit workcamp info site.**



Left: This is where we stayed



Right: Working time

Indonesia: Happiest Moment



Gusmardi during a street action in Göttingen, Germany, holding the blue poster with the text: "Was machst DU für den FRIEDEN?" (What are YOU doing for PEACE?)

As most of Asian activist are aware meanwhile, **SCI has now a contact-organization in Indonesia. It is a group in the starting phase, but enthusiastic and full spirit to start activities and hopefully join SCI later as group.** A recent story in the early development of International Volunteers for Peace Indonesia.

It is 23rd of September 2011. As member of the No-More-War team i heard the news from a direct source: **there was funding for travel costs for volunteers coming from – amongst others - Indonesia for the NMW-training "Forget fists, forge voices"!** The small group of volunteers, what is forming IVP Indonesia now, jumped up by hearing this news. That means that we maybe could send one of us to Germany to learn about non-violence and SCI!

We reacted immediately and found our active volunteer Gusmardi willing to apply on behalf of IVP Indonesia. **The happiest moment in the short existence of IVP Indonesia was the acceptance of Gusmardi at 7th of October 2011. Yeah, our first outgoing volunteer! Ok, not to a workcamp yet, but still. It is a historic moment.**

For me, as Dutch person living in Indonesia, a new challenge started now. While i as VIA-NL – activist have prepared volunteers for many years for going to the (post-)conflict area of the Balkans, I was now about to prepare a volunteer going from Indonesia to Germany, a former neighboring country....

Between the time Gusmardi had been accepted and his flight to Germany, he came almost every day to our home, as at the moment we do not have an office yet. He never went to Europe before, so it was also a matter to let him feel at ease. The orientation took place in the English language, in order to get Gusmardi used to the language, which would be used in the training and the rest of the program. The rest of the program would exist of the German autumn-festival and and a week-program organized by SCI Belgium.

At the end we accompanied him to the airport. At the moment of writing this article the NMW-training has finished, Gusmardi is following the program of SCI Belgium and it seems he enjoys the time in Europe till so far...

For the rest of 2011 we plan to officially register as organization and start planning one workcamp in 2012.

By: Wilbert

Hong Kong: Opening up Workcamp Opportunities for Chinese Volunteers in America



This year Lu decided to join a workcamp again and find ways to apply on her own. Limited internet access was a hurdle and finding the local contact in China was not easy. Lu wrote to SCI and she was given contact details of Chinese contact in Hong Kong. Lu introduced her friend Shuang to SCI and the application process began.

“We do have a lot of innermost thoughts and feelings to share with SCI friends in Asia,” says Lu Huang from Shanghai, China, in her feedback after attending a SCI workcamp in Vermont, USA.

With the help of Sam (contact person for Hong Kong, China) they managed to find the right workcamp for them and managed to get visas on time. Lu and Shuang had to apply for visa and it was complicated. Lu says that she would like to share her experience with other Chinese volunteers who need to apply for visa for voluntary work in the future.

Shuang thought America was a very modern country with machines everywhere. But the first time she went to Vermont she had to change her perception. There were many forests where the workcamp was held. Shuang says, **“the trees stand straight under the blue sky with layers of clouds. I could see the nature. The food is healthy and delicious. I like this kind of life. I have never lived a healthy and happy life like that. I went to bed early, got up early and had three meals on time”.**

Lu says there were lots of happy things she remembers...

- The sweet night my new Japanese friend and I learnt some languages from each other.
- The happy time we spent in water hole with our South Korean friend.
- The happiness when I played Ping-Pong with American friends;

Lu had gone on an exchange program organized by her school, which allowed her to join her first voluntary activity in Germany. Lu says the first workcamp in Germany changed her a lot and the way she thought about life.

we joked it was another Ping-Pong diplomacy between China and America.

- The excitement when several of us danced on stilts
- The grandfatherly tennis teacher told us the story of his love and tennis
- The beauty of the forest
- The handsome American guy who always joked of finding me a boyfriend
- The children’s playground we painted
- The footprint of bears we found in the forest while we were working.

They learn more about the world. Shuang says, “a Japanese volunteer taught them how to speak some basic Japanese. A South Korean volunteer taught them how to sing Korean songs. They also taught others how to write Chinese words.” Final thoughts from Lu, “we were touched by the happiness and the freedom we felt in the workcamp. We hope more Chinese could enjoy workcamps in the future”.

Shuang says,

“If people from different countries can get together and communicate more, there would be no more misunderstandings and wars. The world would be more peaceful. I think the youth should take the responsibility for the future. We should take actions now. I hope every Chinese student will have a chance to know more about the world and contribute to create peace”.

By: Sameera Jayasinge (Sam)

Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom. Marcel Proust

Australia: Kuranda IVP

Betty Timmins has devoted over 20 years to being a wildlife carer 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. IVP has been fortunate to be able to offer volunteers a chance to learn about Australia and its culture and wildlife with Betty at her Kuranda wildlife project and we wish her all the best for the future.

IVP has coordinated a wildlife welfare project in Kuranda in association with Betty Timmins for the past two years. Kuranda is situated in North Queensland, just half an hour away from Cairns and Betty's shelter looks after wildlife that has been injured or orphaned.

This project is now drawing to a close, but **many volunteers have had the chance to experience Australian lifestyles and culture, and learn much more about Australian fauna.**

The variety of wildlife at the shelter varies at any given time but volunteers have cared for kangaroos, wallabies, pademelons, as well as a wide variety of birds, lizards, bandicoots and more.

Jobs that volunteers carried out in their time at Kuranda often included **making up milk formula, feeding the animals four or five times a day, cleaning enclosures and beds, and administering medicines.** In many cases these animals come into care in a state of trauma and stress, so **one of the most important roles volunteers had was to provide a lot of hands-on nurturing and affection in order to settle them and habituate them to human care.**

In the last edition of the Flying Penguin (magazine of IVP Australia, AV), Alicia Tsiu gave readers an insight into life in the Kuranda Wildlife Project. She found it completely different to the limited range of animals in her native Hong Kong, exclaiming "When I first stepped into the house, I thought I was entering a small zoo!"

There are so many different kinds of animals including dog, cat, kangaroo, wallaby, possum, bat, lizard, kookaburra, parrot, peacock, horse etc." **The work was always challenging, but the personal connections she formed with the animals helped her to "know some little tricks in order to guide the blind one or to calm the naughty one,"** as well as to recognize the animals from "their characters or behaviour such as: Bella has a scar over her left eye; Harvey has a folded ear; Kelvin's left eye is only a slit; Mary always runs away from people; Jenny's always hungry and can finish the milk fastest; Woodie always rejects the milk bottle but when I force it into his mouth he will take it happily."

Volunteering in Nepal

“A truly inspiring and humbling experience which we shall cherish to share with our future children...”

Neil, returned volunteer on volunteering.

Nepal is a country with rolling mountains and deep valleys bordered by China in the North and India in the South. It is a sliver of land with a natural border in the form of the Himalayan Mountains dividing Nepal and China. The Indian influence is obvious in many areas of Nepalese life, from food, to the caste systems to the beautiful saris worn by the women.

A large portion of Nepalese farm seasonal crops, produce buffalo and cow milk, herd goats for meat and raise poultry for eggs and meat. The tourist market is currently limited to intrepid travelers who enjoy trekking.

The majority of people here are practicing Hindus with some pockets of Buddhism. This is reflected in every house and village, with shrines or temples that are frequented daily before work, usually to pray and apply the tika on their foreheads.

Neil and I decided to volunteer in Banepa, 30 kilometers from Kathmandu. We would make our way up the mountainside to the work site, 30 minutes up hill.

We'd work side by side with the locals to help them widen their existing fire trail to ensure that there is a considerable break in the tree canopy, to provide an effective gap to ensure that if a fire breaks out it will be less likely to spread. This is carried out all by using a mattock to break the hard earth, as well as moving huge boulders and cutting down trees to build retaining walls and pack the earth behind it to make a widened path.

The immediate need to fix the eroding road leading up to the top of the mountain was identified. **We found ourselves assisting the community to build an improved drainage system to direct the flow of water during the wet season down the mountain and fill in the eroded road with rocks and dirt.**

Logically the higher up locals live on the mountain, the less access they have to facilities, schools, resources and many other necessities to live. This means making a living is that much more difficult.

We worked beside many locals who take more than an hour and a half to walk down the mountain and sell their milk to the small city below, and trek back up the mountain to tend to their animals and land on a daily basis. They take it all in their stride with a smile always ready for the beautiful greeting of Nameste.

Prior to leaving **we rallied family and friends to donate childrens' items that we could take over and distribute to the local school** on top of the mountain. The soft toys, stationery, clothes and books were appreciated greatly. The looks on their faces upon receiving these items could not be described in words, but we hope that these pictures will be able to explain a small portion of their gratitude.

One small decision can affect your life and others around you dramatically. Never underestimate the power of a decision. This trip was a very unique experience, which has helped bring us closer to the beautiful simplicity of living.

By: Neil & Katie Nguyen

India: Happiest Moments

Dear friends,

Warm Greetings from India.

We organized quite a few special events this year and we can safely say that **the concluding part of APPEES was the happiest moment of SCI India as the attendees used the words like excellent, marvellous and incredible to describe the event.**

APPEES was participated by nine of the ten branches and two partner organizations. There were 19 participants from abroad, so it was a great success in term of its international diversity. There was a much better gender ratio than the normal SCI Asian meet. In regard to age distribution, it was really wide.

While we all enjoyed the beautiful weather of Bangalore, a little shortage of rooms put us even more cohesive and closer to the others which helped SCI spirit. The usage of laptops by all the branches reflected the modernization aspects of the Asian branches. On top of it, **the initiatives of Australia and South Korea over web actions really encouraged us to look forward to new ideas. No doubt the contribution of each branch made it a great event and offered lots of fun and insights every day.**

The other importance was that the most popular peace icon -- MK Gandhi presented in his home land with great faculties. The cultural evening was truly great with traditional songs and dances.

While mentioning the APPEES **we cannot forget the APM which brought in the same spirit and effective discussions.** It was a delightful experience for everyone present in the venue and this really made the event fruitful and special.

Apart from this we would like to share the success of "Grounding Our Future". Actions for this project were organized in North (Delhi), South (Kanyakumari), East (Kolkata) and West (Mumbai) of India, about 200 volunteers participated. The details were published in the last issue.

SCI India's partner organization **Human Wave (NGO)** has renewed its contract with **SCI Germany** for a long term **Volunteers (LTV)** placement project in **Community Development activities in West Bengal.** The 3rd batch of 4 volunteers has arrived and participated in education and cultural activities with great enthusiasm.

The interaction with the common people offered them an in-depth knowledge of Bengali society and culture. **They are learning our tradition musical instruments, attending Pujas (worships) weddings and learning about critical aspects and issues of politics of illiterate masses and each day approaching life with greater mental hunger and solidarity.**



The sisters are praying for the well-being of the brothers, a Bengali family festival observed in a slum.



A drawing competition in Mumbai, India

SCI India, West Bengal Group organized a drawing competition on 13th November. 105 children took part in this event. While the children were working, we organized a Peace workshop for two hours with the parents as appeared in the pictures below:



Japan: Happiest Moments



The happiest moment for SCI Japan was composed of 2 elements.

One is the time when we received many messages from SCI friends, through their message we felt real solidarity to recover from 3.11 disaster in Japan. Also some of you did some charity events for Japanese victims and send some funds to us. Some friends sent us 3,000(!) hand-made paper cranes (Japanese origami style). Also we could work with Peter (IVS UK) and Michele (SCI Italy) in the relief workcamp.



After the 3.11 disaster, SCI Japan organized workcamps in the area in May, July and August. In August, **we worked together with local organizations and many volunteers around Japan to prepare the ritual/festival for the victims and for the survivors who wish to rebuild the community.** That ritual/festival took place in the coastal area heavily damaged by Tsunami/earthquake. Even after more than 5 months, there are much debris and many piles of wood and concrete from broken houses we could see. **Many volunteers cleared the land for the ritual/festival picking up broken pieces of glass wishing children would not be hurt when they fell down. Also many volunteers built up many tents for shops.**

The day of ritual/festival started from 11am then continued to 9pm. We could see so many people first time after the disaster. Also it was surprising for me and other SCI volunteers to see many children. Because it is the place just 30km away from the Fukushima nuclear plants. After the disaster, most of the children took refuge from this area due to the radioactivity, but only that day some of them returned to their hometown. The ritual/festival started by a local singer, she sang local songs and her students performed traditional dance. It continued with Bon dance (which is originally religious ceremony to send ancestral spirits back). When it became dark, there were fireworks. One by one the local people gave message for the future and after the message there was one big firework burst across the sky. There is almost

nothing left in the coastal area, so each time when one firework burst, it is so beautiful as if it lighted up the scenery of the damaged area, but at the same time it lighted up the many people's shining faces looking up the fireworks. **Each firework with the message was like prayer for victims and strong hopes for the future. We heard many children's message, it seems their voices were ringing out the dark sea and all the area.** One of SCI members said this ritual/festival was just held in the Bon time (we believe this time the family members who passed away come back home and stay with family for few days and go back to the spiritual world) in fact, this ritual/festival is requiescat and finally the victims can go to the spiritual world and also survivors can say farewell to the victims finally.

The **second happiest moment** was born during this ritual/festival. **The local people allowed us to exhibit the messages which we could receive from the SCI friends around the world and 3,000 hand-made paper cranes. So we made a panel putting the messages and cranes and hold the panel on the path in the ritual/festival area.**

Many people stopped in front of the panel and read the messages and looked at the cranes. I explained where they were from, and one local person said, "just looking at this panel, I feel tears coming up to my eyes." Also some people said, "So many foreign people are thinking about us."

These local people's words were more than I had imagined. All the SCI Japan members felt deep appreciation to the friends in the world showing their love to Japanese people and it really reached to the local people. It was happiest moment for SCI Japan.

The day after the ritual/festival, we went to the local government office and say thank you very much to accept SCI team. The local officers said they would hang the 3,000 cranes in the community hall so that many local people who had looked the panel yesterday would remember the ritual/festival.

Thank you very much to all of you who think about Japan and wishing our recovery from this disaster.

By: Hanae Tsujimoto, SCI Japan



Nepali Happiest Moments



Buddha Jayanti

On the occasion buddha jayanti Peace walk was organized on the co- operation with panauti bihar. We marched around the city praying for world peace.



International Music Festival

Music day was celebrated at Nyatapola Bhaktapur with the support from Alliance Francaise. We presented our friend, Stephen Nah a token and member of SCI Nepal Ajit Koirala who suffered from a bike accident.



Celebrating New Year

On the occasion of New Year 1132 of Newar society, SCI Nepal made a peace mandala and Deepawali

Malaysia: Great projects with lots of motivated volunteers & memorable experiences!



For SCI Malaysia, there are 2 significant projects that we would like to highlight in his AV issue. The: a) Traditional Guqin Musical Charity Concert and b) International Summer Workcamp.

The Traditional Guqin Musical Charity Concert

In January 2011, SCI Malaysia received a call from Mr Aaron Ngiam, our guest performer during our 90th Yr Anniversary Celebration. He was planning a Charity Concert and wanted to donate the money raised to support SCI activities and asked if we agreed and could help out. He is a good friend. Why not?

We sat together and for next 5 months we worked on the task lists. The tasks included helping to secure the event place, sale of tickets and helping out during the pre to post musical event. After much preparation the day finally came. We even coincided it with our International Work-camp,

We shifted camp to near this concert venue on the 9 July 2011 at Janda Baik. **We help the organizer to arrange the stage for the musical instrument, audience seating, reception area and we specially had our Peace Exhibits.**

During this time, we had the privilege to see and hear the artists rehearsing their presentations. We got to see all the backstage activities. It was so amazing and exciting! The concert was presented in two sessions one in the morning and another in the evening.

Early Sunday morning (10 July 2011), everyone put on their happy smiles and in good spirit to welcome the audiences. While some volunteers helped out ushering the audiences to their seats, others provided support at the back stage and reception areas. During the performance itself – our volunteers helped in the serving of Chinese tea, part of the program and presentation, quick stage set-up and on call.



Let us be grateful to people who make us happy;
they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom. Marcel Proust



Kevin, our international volunteer from Dublin, Ireland was overwhelmed with the performance and delighted with his contributing role. This is volunteering!

The two hours Concert, entitled “The Tranquility of the Guqin” had 4 Guqin (a seven-string Chinese Musical Instrument) Masters from China, supported by a few other talented artists which included a bamboo flutist and master calligraphy exhibition as well. It was such a delightful and enchanting concert.



The performance was held at Tanarimba Visitor Center, Janda Baik, Bukit Tinggi. The venue was specially selected as it has a large open auditorium constructed with pine wood, and nested 1500 ft above sea level, in the midst of a Pine Forest. It is naturally cool and quiet up there, and this enhanced the sound, music and ambience of the ancient Guqin so well.

International Summer Workcamp – new site, new partners

This year we are proud to find a new venue for our Summer workcamp, the North East Coast of Malaysia in Kelantan. We were skeptical at first but after the end of the summer camp, we were very happy with the outcome. Among the job done were painting work, cleaning up the orphanage home and interacting with the kids. For cultural exposure – we got to see the placid, casual life style of the people here, the many monuments, the beach. For Sturdy – we get to appreciate the work for the orphans and special people, and lots of experiences of our volunteers.



By: Nurul Syahida

Endnote

The year 2011 is close to an end and New Year is just waiting on our doorstep. How was 2011 for your branch/group?

Our mission is to promote peace and intercultural understanding to empower people to implement and promote pacifist values in their lives-and not -just-'happiness'. But there will be moments when you feel happy during your SCI action. And these moments may be one of the engines for many of us to continue SCI.

We hope through reading this Asian Voices, you shared the happy moments of your Asia-Pacific-Mauritius friends and get new energy to start New Year.

Wish you a Happy New Year

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Asian Voices co-editors

(Pat, Wilbert, Maria, Nurul, Hanae)