

The Flying Penguin

Newsletter of International Volunteers for Peace

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Recycling and sustainability

Theresa Choi volunteered at a workcamp in Kosovo

One glary summer afternoon, I found myself under the respite of a faded UN canvas tent mastering the art of bicycle maintenance. I was there with 9 other volunteers from all corners of the globe.

As we arrived at our campsite on the outskirts of Mitrovica, Kosovo, we were greeted with a pile of bicycle carcasses on one side. To the other side was a string of camping tents; this was to be our home for the next 9 days. In the middle was our bicycle workshop: the UN tent. We gathered daily here, learning from each other and sharing tips and tricks and sometimes even spontaneously breaking out in dance moves!



Working together to repair discarded bicycles

On our afternoons off, we were able to experience the cultural and natural environment of Kosovo. We visited a mosque and an orthodox Christian church, went hiking at Bajgora Mountain, and tried local food and drinks, including the well-celebrated (and rightly so) macchiatos.

At the end of the program, handing the working bicycles over to a local primary school was a humbling and rewarding experience. Seeing the school children with huge grins on their faces was contagious. I turned to a fellow volunteer to share my elatedness only to find him overwhelmed with happiness and apologising that he could not find the words to express this feeling. .



The children enjoying their "new" bicycles

The most important thing I learned from this workcamp is that our humanness supersedes language and culture if we allow it. At the end of the day, we are all human beings; facing similar struggles, celebrating similar achievements and finding joy in the same things. We are borrowing the same resources from this earth and have a responsibility to provide the same opportunities for future generations.

I didn't sign up to this workcamp expecting to change the world. What I hope is that when these students learn of the story of these bicycles; how they were salvaged and recycled, that they develop a better awareness of humans' impact on the environment and then make more meaningful decisions for the rest of their lives.

Pocket full of treasure

Simone Sly volunteering at Stonequarry, Taralga NSW

Not far from the charming historic community of Taralga in NSW Australia is a flora and fauna oasis. This little pocket of fragmented habitat has intrinsic, aesthetic and cultural value for all. Areas of grassy woodland such as the Stonequarry site near Taralga have become increasingly threatened due to fragmentation from land clearing since European settlement. Originally set aside as future cemetery space, the Stonequarry site has large pre-settlement eucalyptus trees and associated understory supporting a treasure trove of species. The biologically diverse site has animals such as White Throated Tree Creepers, Crimson rosellas, kookaburras, possums, swamp wallaby, echidna, not to mention butterflies, lizards, spiders, insects and frogs. These species from different trophic levels live amongst the eucalypt trees, acacia shrubs, wild flowers and native grasses. All the bright flowering shrubs and forbs make the Stonequarry site a beautiful place to visit.

The Stonequarry project aims to minimise the impact of habitat fragmentation on the region's flora and fauna. Habitat destruction is the main cause of biodiversity loss, and can lead to population decline in many species and the risk of extinction. Although surrounded by cleared agricultural land the pocket size oasis at Stonequarry supports many populations, such as the migratory White Faced Heron and Little Eagle.



Removing from weeds from the new growth

Through IVP, volunteers like myself are able to contribute to the site's regeneration and long term preservation. IVP also organised school groups to visit the site for workshops with experts in various fields and incorporating the experience into their learning during school visits by volunteers.

The community of Taralga have been warmly welcoming the volunteers. At the last camp we were welcomed at the community church fair and local bush dance, both of which were great fun even though the fair was drenched by a sudden downpour of rain. The weather was kinder on the days we had visitors to the camp that shared their expertise with us on native grasses and photography of miniscule insects and spiders.

I have been to two work camps at Stonequarry and have enjoyed both immensely. There was plenty of time to socialise; one afternoon we went to watch a movie and on another visited Wombeyan Caves. We also shared music, language, culture and food. I made damper and bread pudding for everyone; and in return I learned to make a handful of delicious dishes that I cannot pronounce but thoroughly enjoy eating. At each work camp I have attended I have made friends that I am still in contact with. I hope to attend many more work camps at Taralga and watch the site transform under careful restoration that minimises disturbance to the ecosystem.

SCI fosters peaceful conflict resolution

Building Inclusive Paths – conflict transformation

In March the final event of the “Building Inclusive Paths” project took place in Rome after a year and a half project. Building Inclusive Paths was a global action aimed at fostering transnational capacity building on conflict transformation and non-violent conflict resolution.

The project gathered youngsters from two European countries (Spain and Italy) and from three programme countries (India, Sri Lanka and Nigeria) affected by past or current internal conflicts. It included seminars, trainings and job shadowing in all the five countries, in fact 12 participants from the all partner countries were involved in a scheme of learning motilities through non-formal education opportunities.

The aim of the project was to acquire skills in the field of non-violent conflict transformations and mediation. The project outcome will be used to do awareness raising and advocate activities. The E-Book is currently available in English, Italian and Spanish.

Yes We Camp!

Environment - Busquístar, Granada, Spain (3 - 24 Jun 2017)



Cultural Asotiation “Acequias para la vida” aims to preserve the environment and to improve the population living standards in this isolated rural area, placed in Sierra Nevada's southern face. Different projects have been implemented, like measuring the water flow in the different

irrigation channels along the Trevelez river valley, and planting three varieties of resistant chestnuts. This year, the focus is on finishing the restoration of the Asotiation headquarters using traditional techniques, building and repairing stone walls, opening paths throughout the Asotiation oak forest.

Agriculture - Piemonte, Italy (18 – 25 Aug 2017)



The Associazione Orto Etico (www.ortoetico.it) aims at the popularisation and education for sustainable respect for nature. In particular in the Canavese area the cultivation of cannabis sativa was widespread. The Associazione and some partner

Organic Farms recovered this old traditional plant especially emphasizing the nutritional properties of the seeds of cannabis sativa. The project aims to raise awareness of cannabis sativa from a cultural point of view and on its low environmental impact farming.

Youth - Leuven, Belgium (18 June to 1 July 2017)

Koning Kevin (KK) is a youth organization which aims for a responsible and animated attitude in children and youngsters. KK organizes creative activities in dance, theatre, music, graphics, multimedia and play/games. During the summer KK organizes about 40 creative vacations camps for children and youngsters. They also provide trainings for guides in youth work. The volunteers will prepare the castle, the material and the Gers (large Mongolian Nomad tents). Participants will learn everything about the build-up of Gers, their background and Mongolian culture.

More workcamps at: <http://www.ivp.org.au/project-search/>

Meet the IVP Family

Rita Warleigh (Sofea), Stephen, Eva, Trinks and Anthony

Rita Warleigh is a founding member of IVP and has recently been elected to the International Executive Committee of Service Civil International (SCI). Mrs Warleigh discovered SCI when she participated in a project in Italy in 1987 and then started the organisation here in Australia, now called IVP.

She has been chief executive or involved with the management committee for most of the 28 years since then and is now ready to use her experience to help with decision-making at the International Secretariat.



Stephen joined the IVP committee in 2012 and now acts as a co-convenor. Highlights of his time on committee have been attending the APM/APPEs in Sri Lanka and helping with the organisation of the GLOVOLA seminar in Sydney.



Eva is the Placement Officer at IVP. She has been involved in the SCI movement for 6 years and now is responsible for the exchange of volunteers at IVP.



Trinks lives in Sydney and is a full-time digital professional working in a bank. He advocates his spare time and IT expertise in IVP's web content and digital marketing.



Anthony Seeto lives in London working as an IT consultant for a bank. Joining IVP Australia in 1993. He continues to support IVP with some of its external relationships.

From the Editorial Board

IVP, SCI and NVDA news

The IVP team are a small group. But we have big ideas. We'd love you to get involved. You will find an introduction to some of our team members in this newsletter (refer to previous page) and more will follow in the next edition.

We are currently planning a project to take a container of bicycles to a refugee camp in Sri Lanka where internally displaced people have been living since the war began 30 years ago. The idea is to send a team with the bikes, set up a workshop and teach bike maintenance to enhance job opportunities. Inspired to some extent by the lead story in this newsletter as well as Rita's study tour to SL last year. Other new projects and workcamps are under discussion but we need more people to help organise them as our current small team are overburdened and running out of steam.

Another plan is moving the office, possibly to Goulburn. We would love to know your thoughts about the idea and whether you would be willing to help with the move. And there are always tasks and teams that need you, such as: Membership, Newsletter, Social Media, Projects. And we are currently in need of a Treasurer and Secretary.

We are delighted to have two Australians joining events as part of the SCI Peers to Peace campaign: Stephen Horn to Poland in May for the Peer University, Simone Sly to Malaysia in July for the seminar on Fundraising and Knowledge Management.

The SCI International Secretariat has an interim coordinator, Lea Csikos, while Sara Turra takes maternity leave to look after the new addition to her family. And while we are talking babies, congratulations to Trinx for his newborn son, a new addition to the IVP family.

Other ways to keep up with the inspiring work of SCI are through their various on-line publications such as Voices of Volunteers, Asian Voices, and join the e-lists such as: announce@sci.ngo, asianannounce@sciint.org. Please like or follow the IVP facebook page, and if you are a returned volunteer or have been active in the office, you can also join IVP Australia Alumni.

Here are calls to join NVDA teams if you want to be active in the Asia Pacific region: Asian IVS History Book team, "What is our IVS?" task force, Solidarity Fund Committee, Vision & Actions, Eco Actions Working Group. For more information on any of these please email rita.sofea@gmail.com.

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