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Volunteer Opportunities

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Spring 2006

Recruitment of volunteers with
communication and ICT skills

Montreal, Canada

Spring 2006

Recrutement of volunteers of the ICV
Montreal Team

Vancouver, Canada

20-23 June 2006

World Urban Forum

Barcelona, Spain

Spring 2005

Volunteers without borders:
youth program

Geneva, Switzerland

25-28 January 2006

Aid and Trade Conference
(welcome services, room supervision,
exhibition support, reporting)

13 February - 28 April 2006

Interpretation internship: Development and
Globalization, between Growth and
Exclusion (interpreting internship,
positions filled)

25 March 2006

Bio-Innovation Day
(welcome and registration services)

30 August to 1st September 2006

Towards Global Access to Health
(welcoming delegates, reporting, etc.)

13-16 September 2006

European Conference on Educational
Research Geneva 2006
(welcoming services, room supervision, bag-
packing, exhibition support, reporting)

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For full list of offices see page 8.

FOUNDATIONS FOR NEW PROJECTS

21 OCTOBER 2005: ICVOLUNTEERS BECOMES A FEDERATION



The first seeds for ICVolunteers were planted in 1997, when Viola Krebs led recruitment of more than 800 volunteers to help coordinate and report on the 12th World AIDS Conference in Geneva. Following the success of this event, individuals who wanted to continue to work together formed an ongoing team of conference organizers and volunteers. Later in 1999, Viola Krebs decided to found "International Conference Volunteers (ICV)", an international non-governmental organization based in Geneva, to provide a permanent structure for our work.

Growth of Our Network and Activities

Since its foundation, ICVolunteers has continued to work to help produce local, national and international conferences on today's most important social, humanitarian, environmental and scientific issues. Our efforts have been possible thanks to the support of our donors and members, as well as our fundamental base, our current network of 1,500

active volunteers, today coming from approximately one hundred countries and speaking some sixty-five languages.

In addition, ICV over the years has developed certain complementary initiatives and programs, always based around our core mission of catalyzing volunteers to help organizers of worthy projects around the globe to promote a better, more equitable and fairer society across all fields and sectors.

Creation of ICVolunteers Federation

As ICV has grown, our activities have become more decentralized. While the majority of our work still takes place in and around Geneva, we now have offices and representatives in a number of other parts of the world.

Feeling the need to adapt ICV's institutional framework to its increasing portfolio of field activities, we launched in October 2005 a new organizational structure, transforming itself into an

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international federation, with national offices and associate partners in various parts of the world.

In addition to its headquarters, our federation has representations in Canada, France, Mali, Senegal, South Africa.

Driving force

ICV remains dedicated to its initial vision: the will to offer innovative services applicable to different contexts and regions. This aim is achieved by matching local volunteers and projects, the two jointly finding their own solutions. Always, these solutions and the inspiration for them come from the careful analysis of need and available compe-

tences, always from the bottom up.

Today, the emergence of the information and shared knowledge society has made it essential to mobilize the citizens. If volunteers were to be put in one single nation, they would represent the fifth largest economy in the world. They are critical actors in society, and actively contribute to human communication, building a society based on more solidarity, sharing and consensus

In such a perspective, volunteerism remains more than ever the space to reinvest so as to contribute to quench the thirst of our world. Indeed, one of the essential characteristics of volunteerism is in fact this dedication to the human kind and this spirit of mission

serving the majority: volunteers are paving the road of the future.

ICVolunteers aims to be the space, a catalyst, for individuals, communities and society in general. ■

OUR VISION

The vision of ICVolunteers is to help develop a future where both individuals and communities can reap the benefits of personal commitment and free will. Through volunteering, we seek to link knowledge with needs and to promote a better, more equitable society involving all fields and actors.

VOLUNTEERING, AN ESSENTIAL BUILDING-BLOCK FOR DEVELOPMENT



Through volunteering, civil society plays a key role for development. Such is the assessment made by the enquiry

"Volunteering, Youth and ICTs," a report realized by various African associations, this observation has served as a canvas for different solidarity projects, mainly in Mali, country where the enquiry took place.

Carried out under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the one of New Information and Communication Technologies, the investigation was coordinated by ICV-Mali. The report of the working group analyses questions related to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) from different angles,

keeping in mind the question of volunteering.

Direct links between the Millennium Development Goals and ICTs are clearly outlined in the study. The report also looks at the implications at the level of State management underlining the role of decentralization and local governance. The report also focuses on the vindication that they offer a unique opportunity and a dynamic tool for Malian youth, or youth in any other developing country, contributing to the accomplishment of the potential for humanity. Volunteerism for youth can be seen as a common thread and the report underlines its role as a means for enhancing a spirit entrepreneurship.

"Our society needs committed and motivated citizens", ensures Mohamed El Moctar Mahamar, coordinator of the working group and representative of ICVolunteers-Mali. When he just obtained his diploma, Mahamar immediately committed himself in the construction of his own future by volunteering in the educational service of his region, thus building valuable experience and of interest. "The program saw itself carried at the ministerial level and I was asked to help coordinate the program." Consciences about the positive impact of his commitment, Mahamar did not hesitate a moment to join ICVolunteers when the opportunity came up.

Oumar Diamounténé, an active member of ICV-Mali, is generally motivated by the aims of ICVolunteers. "Though not well structured in my country, volunteering is not a new phenomenon at all. ICV-Mali offers solid foundations to this means for development, ensuring thus a stable basis for the new generation that will follow in our footsteps."

To actively involve young people and less young people giving them a chance to develop their own solutions. Making sure that each one can, if he wants to, architect of his own future. This is the definition of volunteering. As points out H.E. Mr. Adama Samassékou, former Minister of Mali and president of the international federation of ICVolunteers "volunteering offers accompanying rather than intervention." VK, NG ■

CONFERENCE VOLUNTEERS SHOW THE WAY PROFESSIONALLY



It was a bit chaotic, receiving the hundreds of people who were trying to get into the roundtable discussion with former Soviet President Mikael Gorbachev at Uni Mail last May, to commemorate the landmark meeting of Gorbachev and US president Ronald Reagan in Geneva twenty years ago. But with the help of our dedicated volunteers, all the headsets to follow the interpreters were distributed, frustrated people could be calmed down, and the lucky ones who managed to get in enjoyed a very special evening.

Rescuing the situation is an important part of the oldest service ICVolunteers has to offer: welcoming participants of international conferences and other events organized by non-profits, the local government, international organizations or universities. At this particular occasion, the organizers who called in ICV had not expected so many students to line up for 'Gorby' two hours in advance. They were pushing their way in when the doors finally opened, making it very difficult to distribute headsets. But as a volunteer, one has to adapt and make the best of it.

"You can plan ahead very carefully, but it always turns out a different way. You just have to take that into account", says Wanda Verhagen, who has been involved in welcoming international conference delegates with ICV from the very beginning.

It all started with the international AIDS Conference in Geneva in 1998. Viola Krebs, now Director of ICV, headed the department responsible for recruiting

volunteers, and Wanda was helping her. It was a huge success. During the conference, they set up an information desk for the volunteers and the conference delegates. And afterwards, with many volunteers wanting to do more, Viola created ICVolunteers. Wanda continued working for welcoming services with ICV, and even ended up as President of the ICV Board for several years.

"Welcoming conference delegates is such a nice job", she explains. "You meet friendly people, it is satisfying to be able to help, and you learn a lot. For instance, you have to know that Asian people say yes even when they do not understand you. Or that you should not look Arabic men in the eyes for too long. Or that Muslim men may not want to shake a women's hand. But the most important thing is to be friendly, and easily approachable. After all, most delegates are in a place they don't know."

Micheline Locca, who has been there from the beginning as well, could not

agree more: "You meet people from all over the world and with many different backgrounds. They are a window to the world. It's a real exchange."

Over the years, the core welcoming team of ICV has actually built up a lot of valuable expertise. They know that each conference needs a permanent group of welcoming volunteers, because only they will not have to reinvent the wheel all the time. And they know how to prepare and what to expect.

During the first part of a conference, an ICV team typically figures out what they need to know about the conference and the accommodation, including what the organizers forget to tell them. And by the end of the event, they know more than anybody else. In the meantime, they will for instance receive conference fees, distribute badges, confirm airline tickets, show people around, and always respond in a friendly way to any question about the conference program or the venue. After all, the volunteers are living visit cards for the organizing organization. It may even involve helping people whose passport or car has been stolen, or people who arrive with only ten dollars or without warm clothes in winter.

Although one can only go so far, notes Wanda. To questions like 'Would you know how I could stay and live in Switzerland' or 'Do you want to marry me?' one can only reply by convincing

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FIRST-TIME CONFERENCE VOLUNTEER:

Paul Seed, computer expert at Hôpital Cantonal de Genève:

"I was looking forward to seeing Gorbachev in person but I also wanted to contribute to society as a volunteer and meet other volunteers. After having handed out headsets for people to follow the interpreters, we forgot to keep some for ourselves. But I managed to follow some of the meeting. Gorbachev spoke very well. I also liked working with the other members of the ICV team. The problem was that there were not enough headsets, so people got a bit frustrated. Apart from that it went well."

MAKING SENSE IN THE WAVE OF A TSUNAMI

VOLUNTEERS REBUILD THE ECONOMY, COMMUNITIES AND LIVES IN KHAOLAK



Chongcharoen (Pok) Sornkaew is originally from Thailand and works as a volunteer with ICV. Earlier this year, she spent three months with the Tsunami Volunteer Center (TVC) in Khaolak, a destination severely affected and damaged by the Tsunami that hit the Thai coasts on 26 December 2004.

“Khaolak” is a community located at 80 kilometers from Phuket (Thailand), which suffered the highest number of deaths and affected people caused by the tsunami tidal waves. In Thai, “Khaolak” means ‘grand or principle mountain’. Before the terrible tragedy, this region was a fast growing tourist destination for European travelers who wanted to escape from the crowdedness of the world-famous Phuket. After the catastrophe, Khaolak saw flows of volunteers who came in full solidarity to take part in emergency operations with the Thai medical and welfare teams. Today, volunteers come and go to help with the medium-term reconstruction and re-development efforts.

Undeniably, the volunteers keep what is left of the local economy running by renting rooms, eating at restaurants, buying at local stores and purchasing other services. Their presence alone is a help to the locals, not to mention the labour they put into rebuilding activities, hand-in-hand with the local people.

Pok gives some recommendations for

anyone who is planning to volunteer in a disaster area, such as Khaolak.

“You need to set aside time and resources to go volunteering. It is an unpaid job and one pays for oneself to be on the ground,” she recommends. Based on the TVC’s experience, one month (or more) is an ideal duration for volunteering because you have time to learn and can contribute meaningfully without interruption. If you have less time to spare, set your expectation low and tend to tasks that can be completed easily without too much orientation and training. It is a good idea to inform oneself as much as possible about the country, the culture, the people, the size of damage, the progress, the work done or the needs unmet before you get there. “There is not need to be scared that you would be left alone without help – you will land into a friendly community that makes each day of your stay worthwhile.”

Pok insists on the fact that volunteers need to be aware that although volunteers are much appreciated, we are not heroes nor heroines. The local people are.

In the field, things change on a daily basis although the core principles are observed – help the affected people in meeting their identified needs. Things can appear to be disorganized, chaotic or irrational according to your standards. This is normal for an aftermath of the destruction beyond any imagination. It does not help to criticize when things go wrong but do the best you can to improve them. It is best to do your part of the job in a collaborative spirit with other volunteers, and of course, the local people.

Thais are polite and amazingly accommodating and generous even after an unthinkable loss. They hardly say no to innocent volunteers who ask them to do funny things. Still, beware that the people whom the volunteers are working with are survivors and it was their incredible strength and resilience that helped them through such situation.

Last but not least, volunteers are facilitators accompanying the greater efforts led by the local people. If you are non-Thai and non-local, be extra cautious about bringing in foreign concepts without adapting them to the local culture and practices, be they group work methods, children’s games, plays, arts, classrooms, songs and alike. Be extra careful with orphaned children as they will cling on to any ‘kind-hearted’ volunteer and be disappointed when you leave them. Be kind but true to them – if you cannot come back, never promise you would.

We need to always ask ourselves “how did people build their communities before we came?” The tsunami did not take their skills and wisdom away but ignorant volunteers might.

One last lesson that I learned is that instead of being a giver (which I thought I was before my departure to Khaolak) I was in fact a receiver. I received by ways of gaining insight of the local reality, widening my views of volunteerism in disaster-stricken areas, learning how affected locals overcome great difficulties, and profiting from the people’s time and collaboration.

*“We need to always ask ourselves
“how did people build their
communities before we came?”
The tsunami did not take their
skills and wisdom away but
ignorant volunteers might.”*

“This experience also makes me feel more humble and see the difference between what I thought I could do and what I could actually do. I came back to Geneva hav-

ing a refreshed attitude about helping people in a helpless situation. By not learning and appreciating the strengths of the local people, I find one could be even more helpless than they are,” concludes Chongcharoen.

ICVolunteers recruits volunteers (unpaid) for projects in South Africa, Mali, Senegal, Canada and Spain. This is an opportunity to broaden ones volunteer experience. If you are interested or if you would like to learn more about the Khaolak volunteer experience, please contact our office in Geneva or send us an email to info@icvolunteers.org. ■

Chongcharoen (Pok) Sornkaew / AS

INTERPRETERS AT THE SERVICE OF LANDMINE SURVIVORS

TRAINING OF THE LANDMINE SURVIVORS NETWORK



On the occasion of the meeting of the Landmine Survivors Network, ICVolunteers was once again involved in providing volunteer interpreters.

Anti-personnel landmines kill and severely handicap thousands of people every year in many different countries around the world. With an aim to finding a joint solution to this problem, landmine survivors founded the Landmine Survivors Network in 1995. The organization provides support to landmine victims and fights against this devastating plague which ignores cease fires. In 2001, ICVolunteers provided volunteer interpreters allowing an active participation and constructive dialogue between members of the network, thus bridging linguistic barriers. The meeting took place from 16 to 23 June 2005 in Cartigny, near Geneva, where coordinators of the network discussed the planning of their activities for the next three years addressing any existing challenges of understanding.

Rania Al-Haddad, an Arabic-speaking interpreter, found the theme interesting, though dramatic, and underlines how much she learned about the problems of landmines during this meeting. "I knew there was a problem of mines in Iraq and Palestine, but I did not know that this problem already exists in Yemen, and in Jordan as well," admits the young interpreter.

Humor to deal with suffering

She also learnt about traumatizing figures

such as those gathered for the year 2003, when 8000 persons were killed by mines and about 110 million landmines were planted throughout the world, mutilating many victims. Still worse, following the loss of one or several limbs, victims often see themselves excluded from society and left to fend for themselves. Landmines are an impediment to agricultural exploitation in affected areas, a fact which further impoverishes the population living in areas already weakened by conflict.

Despite these dramatic observations, Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Bosnian interpreters, and others, acknowledged that the atmosphere was not one of despair in Cartigny. To take the edge off suffering, victims do not hesitate to joke. - This allows them to better confront the day to day difficulties of reality and at the same time helping to further their mission. "There remains a lot to be done for landmine victims, not only in terms of their health, but also in terms of their social integration," pointed out Jésus Martinez and Nguyen Hoa Hoc. Both victims of landmines in their early years, they later became coordinators of LSN centers in their respective countries, Salvador and Vietnam. They highlighted the importance of family support and its importance for the social reintegration of victims. They

are now able to help those who do not benefit from support from their families.

Valuable advice from more experienced interpreters

Rania is aware of the importance of her role during the meeting in Cartigny. She says that this experience has also had an important impact on her private and professional life. In addition to being more aware about personal landmine problems, she also had the chance to get to know more about the world of NGOs, their work and the challenges they face.

Her colleagues, some of whom were more experienced than her, were able to provide her with important advice: "I learned a lot from them. They provided me with some hints and we were able to exchange our experiences. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that I was capable of interpreting. I also learned new words in Arabic which I had never used in everyday life."

Bridges were built between interpreters and participants and Rania is happy to keep in touch with them, in particular, with the many Jordanians who were present at the meeting. The most moving moment, the most gratifying and the one which will remain written in her memory is the second day: "All members of LSN stood up to applaud and offered each one of us a symbolic gift in recognition of our work." If she has another chance to help in the future Rania says that she without a doubt she will join the ICVolunteers' team again. ■

Myrna Sultan / Nancy Gagné

MAKE MORE ABOUT LANDMINE SURVIVORS

- Convention aux mines antipersonnels <http://www.icbl.org/treaty>
- Landmine Survivors Network www.landminesurvivors.org
- www.icvolunteers.org

Created by and for survivors, LSN empowers individuals and communities affected by landmines to recover from trauma, reclaim their lives and fulfill their rights.

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them to take watches or chocolates instead.

For Magda, another seasoned ICV volunteer, an international conference cannot be big enough. She just loves to work with people and be useful. Having



worked at the International Telecommunication Union, she knows the UN and the Geneva Conference Centre CICG by heart. And she will use that knowledge to make things better whenever she can. Actually she would have had a tip or two for the organizers of the roundtable discussion with Gorbachev, and so would Micheline. Nevertheless they enjoyed being there. "It was interesting to hear what was going on behind the scenes twenty years ago, because I lived that period. And Gorbachev was very charismatic", says Magda.

Wanda, Micheline and Magda all wish there were more very large conferences coming through Geneva. This year, ICV has been involved in a lot of smaller events and events that needed volunteers with specific technical skills, such as translators, interpreters and reporters. But there are big international conferences coming up again. Make sure you check the ICV agenda and reserve the dates as well! ■

(Corine Schouten, Myrna Sultan)

FIRST-TIME CONFERENCE VOLUNTEER:

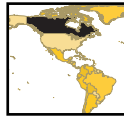
Paul Seed, computer expert at Hôpital Cantonal de Genève:

"I was looking forward to seeing Gorbachev in person but I also wanted to contribute to society as a volunteer and meet other volunteers. After having handed out headsets for people to follow the interpreters, we forgot to keep some for ourselves. But I managed to follow some of the meeting."

STARTING OFF WELL IN MONTREAL

GLOBAL DEMOCRACY CONFERENCE

A positive experience during a recent international conference on civil society in Montreal leaves ICV's Montreal Representation hopeful for the future. It hopes to build on this momentum and provide volunteer services to other upcoming international conferences taking place in Montreal.



With one successful international conference completed, ICV's new Montreal Representation can now look forward to future projects and conferences. For nearly five months this past spring, ICV volunteers worked in conjunction with the Montreal International Forum (FIM) in preparation for the conference "Global Democracy 2005" (G05), which took place at McGill University from 29 May to 01 June 2005. Unlike many other volunteer projects, for which the volunteers are primarily active during the actual event, ICV's Montreal Representation provided the FIM with volunteers as early as February 2005 – nearly four months before the start of the Global Democracy conference! In total, ICV volunteers contributed to the preparation of the FIM with an average of slightly more than seventy hours per week leading up to the event. They completed a variety of tasks and responsibilities: administrative work, web site maintenance (www.g05.org), communications and press release writing, translation, photography, fundraising and sponsorship.

During the conference, an additional twenty-five volunteers joined forces with the ten already in place to help guarantee a smooth-running conference. The volunteer base was diverse, with sixteen nationalities and nearly just as many languages represented. Many of the G05 participants made sure to highlight the impressive linguistic diversity, professionalism and motivation of the volunteers; such praise should come as no surprise, considering the average volunteer was a master's student studying international affairs or a related field. In fact, most of the volunteers were willing to give so much of their time because the subject matter of the conference was of great personal interest to them.

Focusing on the role of civil society within global governance and international institutions such as the United Nations,

Global Democracy 2005 attracted more than 400 participants from over sixty countries. From various professional backgrounds, the participants were brought together to create realistic civil society visions and strategies for global democracy, or as the conference motto says, to "move from reaction to real action." The volunteers, when not working, were able to attend the various sessions, benefiting from world-class speakers such as Cândido Grzybowski (co-founder of the World Social Forum).

The presence of such well-known speakers obviously attracted the attention of the media, both local and national, and a team of volunteers oversaw media relations. The publication of several articles and interviews in the written press is a testament to the team's successful work. Having positions of responsibility, such as media relations, conference reporting, or interpretation, kept the volunteers motivated and focused on the job at hand. A member of the protocol team, Mohamed said that he "would recommend to his friends that they apply for ICV volunteer opportunities because they are challenging and interesting positions." This positive word-of-mouth reputation should help ICV's Montreal Representation as it works towards developing a long-term presence in Canada.

In the near future, ICV in Montreal plans to continue to work on a long-term basis with some of the G05 volunteers, with the goal of increasing ICV's presence in the region. These volunteers would work in close coordination with the representation already in place in Montreal, as well as with some of the members of ICV's headquarters in Geneva. The hope is that by bringing together all of these qualified and motivated professionals and volunteers, ICV can look back on the Global Democracy 2005 conference as one of the first in a long list of success stories. ■

Curtis Rojakovick

AFRICA@HOME A SUCCESS

WORLDWIDE COMPUTING RESOURCES TO FIGHT THE MALARIA EPIDEMIOLOGY

One of the projects in which took part the CyberVolunteers Program this year is Africa@home, a project related to the fight against malaria. Two young African from Yaoundé and Bamako spent several months at CERN in order to actively help build the project. A positive experience overall.



Bakary Sagara from Mali and François Grey in front of the Grid computers at CERN

Malaria causes about 500 million clinical attacks each year, and over a million deaths, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa. As well as causing this enormous burden of acute illness, malaria is a major factors inhibiting economic development in endemic countries, which have per capita GDP growth rates in of 0.25-1.3% points lower than those in industrialized countries. It has its greatest effects amongst the poorest Africans, aggravating social inequity.

Simulation models of the transmission dynamics and health effects of malaria are an important tool for malaria control. They can be used to help determine optimal strategies for delivering mosquito nets, chemotherapy; or vaccines, which are currently under development and testing.

The Swiss Tropical Institute (STI) has developed a computer model for malaria epidemiology and harnessed its in-house PC capacity, about 40 machines, to do preliminary studies. But far more computing power is required to validate such models and to adequately simulate the full range of interventions and transmission patterns relevant for malaria control in Africa. This is the context in which was carried out the Africa@home project, the goal of which is to increase the computing resources available for

malaria epidemiology modeling by a factor of 100 or more, compared to what is available to STI today. This can be achieved by adapting the STI's computer model so that it can run on an open-source platform called BOINC (Berkeley Open Infrastructure for Network Computing), technology available at the Grid computer lab at CERN. This will allow the modeling program to be downloaded from a public website by thousands of individuals around the world, who are prepared to donate idle time on their PCs to this cause.

Africa@home, an interdisciplinary project, is the result of a partnership between CERN, the University of Geneva, the Swiss Tropical Institute, ICVolunteers and Informaticiens sans frontières (ISF). Financed by the Geneva International Academic Network (GIAN), the project also works with the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie* and its *Campus numériques francophones*.

The implementation of Africa@home involved intercultural exchanges through the participation of two cyber-volunteers from African Universities, recruited through the CyberVolunteers Program.

Bakary Sagara, who teaches Computer Sciences at the University of Bamako, spent two and a half months as a member of the Africa@home team at CERN.

"It is a good thing for the African continent to be involved in this kind of project, as we move from observers to actors," points out Bakary. Having studied in Russia some ten years ago, he know more or less what to expect, but still felt there was a need to adapt: "Even though I was very well received by the CERN and Grid team, this experience still required a certain capacity to adapt on my part."

When asked what advise he would give to future cyber-volunteers, he underlines: "Europe is different." It is therefore important that one is well prepared for such an experience from a psychological point of view." He further advises: "such an experience represents a commitment, first for the project, but also some sacrifices as one does not come here for tourism."

For François Grey, one of the project coordinators, this exchange has been very enlightening: "The unique thing about Africa@home is that it involves Africans. I learned a lot from William and Bakary. In particular with respect to their thinking and way of doing things, but also about the every-day life of Africans who live in regions where it is rare to find anyone who has not had malaria."

Created by Bakary and other team members, the web site of the project has been launched and can be seen at <http://africa-home4.cern.ch>.

A continuation of the Africa@home project is planned for 2006. VK / NG ■

Volunteer News (English)

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PORTRAITS

TEAM MEMBERS TELL THEIR STORIES



Sobia: "During my internship, I learned a lot. I got the chance to improve my writing skills."

The volunteer team at the Geneva office is a critical part of ICVolunteers, without which the organization could not run. Long-term volunteers, taking on responsibility for membership services, fundraising, translation and more, help the organization in a significant way. Each year, ICVolunteers offers a number of internships, in particular in the field of translation (specifically for English, French and Spanish).

Sobia Zafar, originally from Pakistan, tells her experience. "I learned a lot with ICVolunteers. Especially at the UN, I got the chance to improve my writing skills. Since I had to submit writing on time. Reporting at the Sub-Commission on Human Rights was not only a friendly interaction, but also a chance to meet people I would not have otherwise."

She continues with a smile: "At the office, I find the environment friendly and relaxed. I don't do it because I have to but because I would like and enjoy it." Sobia wrote the volunteer guide to India: "I liked the Indian project because I enjoy to do research. I thought that India was very similar to Pakistan, but by doing research I discovered that there are many difference. Seeing all of this, I feel like traveling more."

She concludes with an anecdote: "I learned how to take the bus, because before I only traveled by car, back in Pakistan and even here in Switzerland. I then had to learn how to use the Geneva public transportation system which was

very new to me."

Christian Liani, originally from the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, speaks out. "Doing civil service helps civilists fulfill tasks which, otherwise, are not part of their everyday's life." My experience of the past two months at ICV gave me insight into the recruitment and coordination of volunteers for events, an activity I did not know anything about before. However, thanks to the help of my colleagues at the ICV office, I was quickly able to find my place corresponding to my skills and thus share my knowledge in the field of information technologies. It was a rich experience for me which I can only recommend to future civilists."

Marie Hervouët, originally from France and translation and interpretation student made an internship with ICV. She explains to us why she came to ICV.

"I was looking for an internship finalizing my studies when I heard about ICV and its activities appeared very interesting to me. I started my internship back in April 2005, during which I had the occasion to work as an interpreter for the European University of Volunteering in Lucerne. This was a challenging and at the same time rewarding experience. I also was able to participate in the Gorbachev Conference, this time handing out headphones and welcoming participants. It is not every day that one sees personalities such as Gorbachev. Unfortunately, I only saw him for about 30 minutes. During this time, I was able to observe the excellent work of the interpreters. They had not been able to prepare themselves, as the debate was a round table rather than a presentation of prepared speeches. Having myself experienced working as an interpreter, I was aware of the difficulty of the task at hand." Sitting with her arms crossed, Marie says with a timid voice: "I always thought I did not want to work in this highly demanding profession... It remains very exciting though. ICV gives me a chance to practice some and learn more about where I want to take my professional carrier."

As show these three testimonies, each day at ICV brings a new experience and a new step of sharing and exchange. ■

About ICVolunteers

ICVolunteers (ICV) is an international non-governmental organization that recruits, trains and coordinates volunteers for non-profit conferences, events and projects. In addition, ICVolunteers plays an important role in the field of volunteerism by promoting civic commitment and involvement, and by providing leadership and links between organizations, individuals and communities.

ICVolunteers works with a network of about 1,500 volunteers from some 100 countries and speaking 65 different languages.

As ICV has grown, our activities have become more decentralized. Feeling the need to adapt our institutional framework to our increasing portfolio of field activities, ICVolunteers launched in October 2005 a new organizational structure, transforming itself into an international federation with national offices and associate partners in various parts of the world.

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ICV is able to develop its projects thanks to the support of its members and donors. We would like to thank all those who have helped us in 2005.

To become a member, visit our web site.

For donations, postal account:
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