



Spanish Volunteers bring fresh sangria to the veins of Kyrgyzstan

Through teaching English, building websites, and implementing e-government solutions; university students provide opportunities for their hosting partners.

As part of the United Nations Volunteer programme, five university students from Spain spent several months teaching vital skills and implementing communications services at local development organizations in Kyrgyzstan. While facing language and cultural challenges the volunteers built friendships and opened doors for their colleagues and beneficiaries.

Rakel Orihuel spent her six-month assignment with the "Alliance for budget transparency" an organization whose mandate is to facilitate efficient interaction between the state and society, especially with regards to budget policy and transparency. This NGO is composed of 17 different associations that advocate for healthcare, human rights, democracy and issues that affect women and youth. Orihuel assisted ALLIANCE with a marketing plan, website development and strengthening collaboration between members of the NGO. Not an easy task as the staff does not speak English and their projects are developed in the Russian language. Orihuel looked forward to these challenges though, "the adventure of dealing with barriers every day is a unique experience."

Román Gonzalvo volunteered as a social worker and therapist at the Day Care Centre of Autism and Mentally Handicapped Children. His challenges with communication helped him understand the children he worked with and saw the parallel between his communication issues and what these children experienced daily. At the Centre, Gonzalvo helped implement innovative new teaching technologies that use pictures to communicate with the children such as BOARDMAKER, a Pictogram game, TEACCH, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), and Total Communication. Gonzalvo used these techniques to "help the children with different games, educative activities, social skills," he goes on to say that playing these games with the children helped bridge the communication gap.

continued on page 2



Raúl López, Francisco Escudero Tello, Rakel Orihuel, Román Gonzalvo and Laura Morcillo Montalbá

UNV Corporate volunteers lend their expertise to development organizations

Through UNV's Corporate/Private Sector Programme, current and retired professionals put their business expertise to use in the field of development. Volunteers provide short-term advisory services to clients, which can be small- and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs), trade and industry groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and policy makers and institutions strengthening private sector development. The purpose of the UNV Corporate/Private Sector Programme is to create jobs, raise production efficiency, support socio-economic growth, promote environmental protection, introduce Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D), and facilitate market expansion.

Expert volunteers are recruited from a network of partner corporations, companies, professional and retiree associations. In November 2008, a computer science teacher and consultant from Italy, Dr. Domenico Consoli spent three weeks in Kyrgyzstan as a first-time UNV volunteer from the Association of Senior Volunteers 'Seniores Italia'.

Consoli's mission was to support the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) e-governance project in Kyrgyzstan. The development of e-government is one of the main priorities for public administration reform in this country. UNDP's democratic governance programme has been very active in this process, providing technical expertise and support to government and civic organizations alike to build capacities for better governance at the local and national levels.

continued on page 3

Ashar returns again!

The UNV Country Office in Kyrgyzstan is happy to present the second issue of the reestablished "Ashar", the local UNV newsletter. With the help of current and previous UNV volunteers and thanks to Online Volunteer Ms. Dina MacDougall, a Canadian Communications Specialist, the newsletter will keep you informed about the new and ongoing work and events of the UNV programme in this country.

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Disaster response in Kyrgyzstan and UNV..... p.2
Plight of Kyrgyz elderly during winter..... p.3

UNV Japanese university volunteers..... p.4
International Volunteer Day (IVD) 2008..... p.4

UNV message from the field..... p.5
UNV V4D scheme..... p.6





UNV joins local and global organizations to implement disaster response in Kyrgyzstan

United Nations Volunteers have always helped coordinate and provide relief to communities following mayor disasters such for example Hurricane Mitch in Central America in 1998, the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 and the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005.

Quickly sharing information between governments and relief agencies, mobilizing resources, and using volunteers' experience in disaster response locally, ensures that immediate assistance is delivered to communities overwhelmed by unimaginable destruction. The UNV programme serves as a communication channel between the local community in crisis, to national governments, donors, international aid organizations and the UNV network within the UN - a crucial exchange to tailor assistance to local needs and conditions.

Volunteers based in disaster prone regions, often serve in their own communities; work with residents, local officials and NGOs to develop community-based disaster preparedness programmes that reflect the local environment. It is because of these efforts that thousands of villages and communities around the world are now empowered to face and survive disasters. After a disaster strikes, UNV continues to work with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as with other UN agencies and national governments in the immediate and long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts in these communities.

UNV is active in promoting the vital contributions of volunteers and voluntary action - at local, national and international levels - also in disaster preparedness and mitigation. Through its global outreach, UNV advocates the importance of including trained and organized volunteers in any disaster response. It works towards the advancement of national policy and concrete action to strengthen support for, and recognition of, volunteers in disaster preparedness and mitigation activities.

It is in this spirit of disaster response that the Government of Kyrgyz Republic (KR), United Nations organizations and key NGOs partners, have joined to form the Disaster Response Mechanism in Kyrgyzstan. This mechanism, assembled last year, is a coordinative, deliberative and consultative body established to develop and

maintain a unified policy and strategy in disaster response and humanitarian aid in the Kyrgyz Republic. Under the guidance of a Coordination Unit (DRCU), disaster response is implemented in Kyrgyzstan by assigned national response groups within selected thematic areas of intervention.

These areas of intervention reflect the UN cluster response approach used worldwide and are adapted to national conditions. This cluster approach strengthens partnerships and ensures predictability and accountability in disaster response through clear division of labor among partners and definition of their roles and responsibilities throughout the key sectors.

Since the establishment of this mechanism UNV Kyrgyzstan has joined other shelter specific local and international organizations to form the Shelter Sector. The overall strategy of the Shelter Sector is to assist national and local government with providing support to target vulnerable groups. Measures of this support include the provision of shelter winterization and camp management for both human and natural made disasters.

Under this sector, in September 2008 UNV Kyrgyzstan entered into partnerships with HelpAge International (HAI), Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA), Babushka Adoption, Public Association for Social Protection of Population (PASPP), and Resource Centre for the Elderly (RCE), to use existing volunteer networks in the Kyrgyz Republic to implement a winter contingency project under the Shelter Group of the National response mechanism.

Records from the 2007-2008 winter in Kyrgyzstan report that an estimated 120 homeless people died due to exposure. Within the last winter the project has been included in the "UN Flash Appeal" for Kyrgyzstan. It aimed at the distribution of essential food and non-food items to the elderly population throughout Kyrgyzstan. As a preventive humanitarian measure, this project proposal included ongoing home visits to mitigate the isolation that is commonly experienced by this vulnerable group during the harsh winter months.

Spanish students continued from page 1

Sustainability and the environment were key issues for Laura Morcillo Montalbá. Working with a professional and experienced NGO provided her with new skills to promote sustainability in Kyrgyzstan. Within her 6-month mission, Montalbá became close to the staff and transcended any cultural hurdles. While helping with a varied scope of assignments Montalbá sought creative ways to contribute to her NGO, "volunteerism is about wide comprehension...innovation and creativeness."

An assignment at the UNDP Democratic Governance Programme challenged Francisco Escudero Tello. On his first day, Tello experienced a "professional cultural shock", when he found himself meeting with the political elite of Bishkek while exploring issues such as e-government solutions, web development and IT implementation. From these discussions, Tello went on to participate in projects such as developing a website for the National Agency of Local Self

Government and was involved with the research of several solutions related with e-government. Tello was not daunted by such challenges, "I was grateful to have this opportunity and ready for the hard work."

Raúl López spent his six-month assignment at the Diabetes Association of Kyrgyzstan teaching English to children, teenagers and adults afflicted with this disease. In most cases, volunteers are their only contact to the world outside of Kyrgyzstan. Lack of resources make it difficult to travel beyond Kyrgyzstan's borders.

"I consider myself and my former colleagues, two Japanese students, like little windows in their lives...I have shared very good moments with them," López says as he leaves Bishkek with fond memories of a modern city and a valuable cultural exchange with the patients he worked with and the doctors and staff that treat them.





Exhibition “*Winter Diaries*” tell stories of survival from the elderly in Kyrgyzstan

Winters in the Kyrgyz Republic threaten the 526,400 people who are over the pension age.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, 526,400 residents are elderly or senior citizens. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 80% of these people live on \$1 or less per day. The number of elderly is also increasing annually, escalating the need for a national poverty reduction or emergency response strategy.

Despite the extreme levels of poverty that exist in the elder population, this group is not officially recognized as vulnerable and deserving of special assistance. As a result, government policies on poverty reduction and social protection leave the elderly cold. The link between senior poverty and child poverty is also missed. Intergenerational poverty is persistent in the context where children are often cared for by their grandparents. The pension received by seniors is a significant survival mechanism for poor households across the Kyrgyz Republic. The most vulnerable in this group are the elderly living on their own or those living in residential institutions. This crisis escalates when this population face the brutal elements of winter at this latitude. To help the elderly weather these conditions, it is essential



Asker Turatov, 66 and his wife

that appropriate assistance reaches them efficiently.

To help raise awareness and support, volunteer Azuma Nakahira told the story of the elderly in Kyrgyzstan through art. In March 2009, Nakahira completed a five month UNV University Volunteer assignment with the NGO, HelpAge International. His exhibition, The ‘winter diaries’ of older people held for two weeks in Bishkek during March was based on photographic case studies and video interviews which he collected over a series of field visits between December 2008 and February 2009

At the opening speech of the exhibition, UNV Programme Officer Achim Merlo highlighted the importance of volunteerism and advocating for the vulnerable, “Working on raising the awareness about the living conditions of elderly people in this country is an important element in understanding where our societies are going, the future challenges in front of us, and the social problems that we need to tackle in development,” Merlo added, “These aspects are the basis for voluntary intervention by individuals that care for others... Azuma Nakahira is a remarkable example of these volunteers.”

Corporate volunteers continued from page 1

At the heart of Consoli's mission were three tasks; to increase e-government readiness, to design an interactive web portal for the Public Agency, and to provide a technical report on the usability of web portals. A dialogue with the National Agency was crucial for designing a strategy to implement the web portal thus enhancing communication between the community, and the local and central governments. Consoli enjoyed building these relationships with the Kyrgyzstan community, “This experience has given me a force to continue to improve the services of the community.”

Also through the UNV programme, the SHELL Project Better World corporate volunteering scheme brought Dr. Adetoun Mustapha, the Senior Portfolio Economist of SHELL Nigeria Ltd, to the Civic Environmental Foundation UNISON, an environmental NGO in Bishkek, to serve as a volunteer energy consultant. Kyrgyzstan's energy challenges range from inadequate supply, to a poor infrastructure unable to handle the increasing demand. High energy losses are reported, with most buildings losing up to 60 percent of their heat during the winter due to inadequate technologies.

UNISON has successfully implemented several energy-related projects. Mustapha joined a team of five staff, and two enthusiastic university interns from Europe. To begin, Mustapha's role was to write project and funding proposals and coach her team about IT tools. Then on to reviewing the organizational strategy, current realities and how to achieve future goals. Mustapha organized a “UNISON retreat day” where the team reviewed their organizational goals and performance; carried out a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities



Adetoun Mustapha training UNISON team

and Threats); brainstormed UNISON's critical success factors; and identified focus areas.

Other projects involved the provision of sustainable toilets as part of a school eco-sanitation project, and facilitating post-implementation reviews of recently completed projects; one of which was building a new energy efficient medical facility to replace one that frequently suffered power outages. Photovoltaic collectors and thermal solar water collectors were installed to store energy to keep the facility running and provide clean water and heat during the winter.

Mustapha enjoyed the camaraderie at the UNISON office while they shared naan (traditional round flat bread) and, tea and discussed climate change with students. “The Kyrgyzstan mission was my first experience as a volunteer in a different culture and a challenge that I would like to repeat again.”





UNV university volunteers from Japan open the lines of communication in Bishkek

Shoko Higuchi traveled from Kwansei Gakuin University in Japan to work with an NGO from May to September 2008. Higuchi worked at the Alliance for Budget Transparency in Bishkek, whose aim is to support the democratization of the Kyrgyz Government through facilitating partnerships between the state and civic body, and promote budget transparency at all levels of government. Kyrgyzstan gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and this Government is still evolving.

The role Higuchi played in these efforts was to set up an English website for the Alliance and train local staff on how to update it. This service will help the Alliance share experience and information with foreign stakeholders. After taking Higuchi's computer training, the Office Manager at Alliance was impressed, "you opened my eyes," she said after learning how to update their new website. Higuchi reflects on this experience, "This was the very moment when I felt I could bring a contribution to my host NGO as a volunteer."

Fostering communication was also the goal of Akemi Ashida, who worked at a centre for diabetics in Bishkek from May to September 2008. Ashida offered English training to the staff and patients living with diabetes.

Teaching the beneficiaries of this organisation English without using Russian was very challenging. "Many people asked me: 'Why are you an English teacher? You are Japanese.'" At first Ashida wasn't sure how to reply. A few weeks into her coursework she began to understand her pupils' trepidation about speaking a new language. Lack of confidence and embarrassment prevented them from



Akemi Ashida with two of her students

speaking English in fear of making a mistake.

When Ashida reflected upon her own experience studying English, she realized that she also faced the same challenges. She used this experience to teach her new students, "I am not a native speaker of English, but I taught them the enjoyment and importance of studying other languages."

Volunteerism is rewarded in many ways. Before leaving Bishkek, the staff and children at the hospital presented their appreciation to Ashida in English via their notebooks. The words that Ashida taught them during her language classes were returned in gratitude through their notebooks.

Celebration for Volunteers and Action for the Vulnerable in Kyrgyzstan

International Volunteer Day (IVD) 2008

Each year, International Volunteer Day (IVD) offers an opportunity for volunteer organizations and individual volunteers to make their contributions visible - at local, national and international levels. Over the years, rallies, parades, community volunteering projects, environmental awareness, free medical care and advocacy campaigns have all featured prominently on IVD.

IVD 2008 marked the end of a difficult year that saw rising food and fuel prices, accelerating climate change and turmoil in world financial markets. However despite the conditions, the altruistic spirit of volunteerism is immense and renewable, as each individual can

make a difference in society through compassion and service to ease the troubles of our time.

In Kyrgyzstan to celebrate IVD on 5 December 2008 the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Volunteers and Peace Corps Volunteers performed a cultural show in the morning at the Homeless Children Rehabilitation Centre of Champaskaie Winecombinat to enlighten, entertain and educate homeless children about foreign cultures.

The League of Volunteers and Youth NGO Atul together with Agenet Network, put on in the afternoon a fundraising concert with famous Kyrgyz singers, bands, dancing groups, and the volunteers on stage.

Funds raised in this occasion went to the purchase and distribution of heating utilities and coal for the elderly people in Bishkek. These efforts in combination with the celebration on IVD promoted volunteerism and their organization mission to contribute to social development.

In the evening Public Charity Fund 'Babushka Adoption' also held its annual Fundraising Party with a Latino flavor event called Noche Latino. The evening was accompanied by Kyrgyz singers, dancers, dancing Latino music and a lottery prize draw.

The funds raised from the Latino evening event went towards support of Babushka Adoption beneficiaries.



The IVD 2008 billboard on Chui Avenue in Bishkek





UNV Message from the Field

Inga Davidova

**Kyrgyz international UNV specialist in Afghanistan
for UNAMA (August 2006 – June 2007)**

United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) are dispatched all over the world with the mission of promoting the spirit of volunteerism at the community level. Making a difference in the communities they work for is the main goal of each national and international volunteer. However, this is not the only task of UNV volunteers. Inga Davidova reports her experience from her assignment at the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

I joined the UNAMA in August 2006 to June 2007 as an international UNV specialist as Training Officer for this mission. The major task of the UNAMA Training Section where I was assigned, was to provide training for the UNAMA staff, from teaching English to arranging specific training such as human rights, leadership & management, career navigation and career development, and internal training for UN staff: competency-based interviewing, communication and team building, performance management and reporting.

The focus was also to incorporate local women working for UNAMA into the training activities. Afghan women were interested in learning new skills and applying them in their daily work. This education promoted knowledge through live training as well as online training: teaching how to order and distribute books, CDs or DVDs through self-training in different fields: finance, accounting, procurement, leadership, working in a diverse environment, and dealing with stress.

During my assignment with the UNAMA Training Section I visited two remote regions where training was provided for local staff in Herat and Kunduz. I was delighted to find that the training in Kunduz was staffed by 40% local women from the UNAMA office who were trained on career enhancement.

I also assisted the Chief Training Section with reviewing the mission training plan and monitoring the budget to ensure consistency with the overall goals of the mission's mandate and United Nations policies on staff development. Other tasks included providing technical and logistical support for outsourcing trainers and presenters from other sections; gathering information on international training consultant agencies and individual trainers to create a training professional database, and assisting the UN System Staff College in Turin, Italy, with updating this database.

My main area of responsibility was also "out of country training" which included sourcing external training programs for staff members and professional trainers/consultants, from outside of Afghanistan. At the same time, we were sending local Afghans and international staff, including UNVs to various UN training activities outside Afghanistan. Many Afghans working for UNAMA participated in different training courses abroad, especially at the UNLB Training Center in Brindisi, Italy.



Girls class in Badakhshan, Afghanistan

I helped develop many training programs such as an e-Learning pilot project for UNAMA staff that featured 10 different on-line courses, but to my disappointment it did not evolve due to technical issues as the internet connection in the region was unstable. However, we have developed a bi-monthly Training Bulletin, containing information on all training activities and requirements for enrollment.

In November 2006, I was selected to participate in the Peer Helper Training programme. After completing the staff counseling training phase I, I was required to provide peer support to staff members of UNAMA, both local and international, as part of the Staff Counseling/Peer Helper network for the Mission.

After the mission as an UNV international specialist in Afghanistan, I worked at a commercial company in Kazakhstan for 1.5 years. That was a good experience, but I realized soon that I still want to serve at least one more time as a UNV in a UN peacekeeping mission. After this experience in Afghanistan and a previous one in Liberia, I applied once again. At this very moment, I am working for the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti as Support Officer for the UNV volunteers serving for the Mission.

Inga Davidova





United Nations Volunteers Volunteering for development (V4D)

The V4D Management Cycle.

In 2007, the V4D Taskforce on the UNV Volunteer Management Cycle, based at UNV Headquarters in Bonn, took an inventory of all management tools, policies, instruments, and activities from the UNV and other volunteers sending organizations over the years.

The information collected, pertained to three particular stages of the UNV volunteer management cycle: pre-assignment briefings; orientation, briefing and training upon arrival and end, and post-assignment debriefings and orientation. Basically, the inventory identified gaps and a particular need for in-house harmonization.

On the basis of these findings, an UNV volunteer management cycle was developed for all stages. This V4D scheme illustrates the phases of a volunteer "life" from the pre-recruitment selection until the end of the volunteer assignment. Beyond each phase specific management tools are foreseen. On the field, the scheme is implemented by UNV Country Offices in all countries where the UNV programme is present.

